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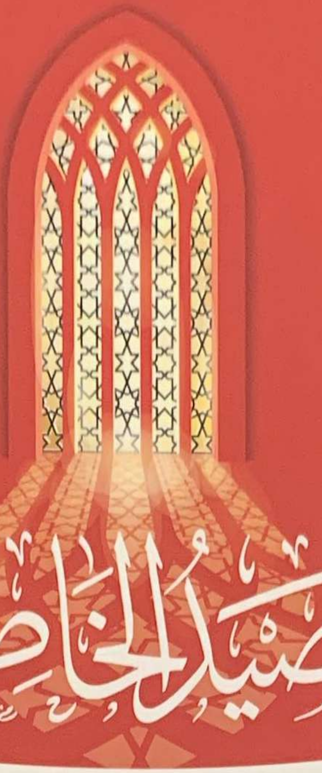

صيد الخاطر

CAPTURED THOUGHTS

A Collection of Thought-Provoking Gems, Persuasive Eye Opening Wisdoms, Insights about Religion, Ethics and Relationships

A complete translation of the Classical Text Ṣaydil al-Khāṭir

Imām Ibn al-Jawzī
رحمه الله

دار السنة

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

صَيْدُ الخَاطِرِ

في التَّخَلِّي مِنَ الأمْرَاضِ النَّفْسِيَّةِ
وَالتَّحَلِّي بِالآدَابِ الشَّرْعِيَّةِ وَالأخْلاقِ المَرْضِيَّةِ

تأليف

الإمام أبي الفرج عبد الرحمن بن علي بن الجوزي

٥١٠ - ٥٩٧ هـ

al-Ḥāfiẓ
Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]

CAPTURED THOUGHTS

being a translation of his masterpiece
'Ṣayd al-Khāṭir'

دار السنة

"I noticed that whenever I open the eyes of contemplation, I sight incredible hidden notions and thoughts that never before crossed my mind. I therefore lavish such thoughts with discernment as they are too precious to be overlooked. It is for this reason I authored this book and made it a place wherein I place all my captured thoughts."

[al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī]

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A Collection of Thought-Provoking Gems, Persuasive Eye Opening Wisdoms, Insights about Religion, Ethics and Relationships

by al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī

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FOREWARD

All perfect praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds. May the peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), his Household, his Companions and all those who follow him until the Last Day.

We are pleased to present to the reader the acclaimed work of the great prolific scholar and Imām, Ibn Jawzī. This complete work is the eighth installment of the Ibn Jawzī Series, being published under the *'classic collection'* section of Dār as-Sunnah.

As a scholar of immense versatility and stature, Ibn Al-Jawzī's renown is recognised far and wide, being one of the most oft-quoted Muslim personalities in the last few centuries. He wrote over seven hundred individual works in fields as vast as jurisprudence, tafsīr, history, polemics, medicine, poetry, social sciences and other than them. In fact Imām Al-Dhahabī said about him, "I'm not aware of anyone among the scholars to have written as much as he did."

It is reasoned that his vast scholarship combined with personal experiences at grass roots level in society, with an acute understanding of human psychology gave him a distinct edge that not many others could emulate or follow. Ibn Al-Jawzī was able to reach out to the aristocracy and the laity of his time, leaving a permanent mark of change through his style of tact and wisdom. He himself attested to the fact that thousands of people who attended his public sermons and gatherings had repented at his hands, making dramatic changes in their lives in bettering their worldly and religious commitments.

We therefore see much of his charisma and insights reflected in his works; remaining as relevant in today's politically complex and socially chaotic world as his own in 12th century CE Baghdad. Often we come across circumstances and milestones in our lives necessitating weighing decisions with intent to seek the most appropriate outcomes, while preserving our ethics and sacred values, ensuring our decisions do not negatively impact others. The tougher the challenges become, the more challenging it is navigating through a myriad of options. This scenario is compounded when trustworthy people of counsel and sound judgement are few and far between to lend their wisdoms.

It is thus, important to know why Ibn Al-Jawzī decided to jot down his percepts in the manner that he did in this book. He addresses matters touching theology and many other musings and contemplative theories surrounding geo-socio and economics of human behaviour. He also raises ideas that may seem controversial, yet it's not until we become cognisant of his particular approach in attempting to achieve win-win situations, that we realise ingenuity in his methods and the prowess in channelling people's feelings appropriately. Indeed our goal in life is to strengthen our relationship with the Creator and lead a more complete and wholesome way of life in which we earn the Pleasure of Allāh in every path we take and decisions we make.

Another animating point about this work is that the author addresses himself in a very personal way as he questions his own self and addresses his own feelings; reprimanding them at times and highlighting some of his mistakes and weaknesses. At times it seems he is extending his advice to others, but in reality he's simply introspecting with the confidence that others at large will also find commonalities for self-reform. Some of the subject matters he deals with relate to health and wealth, sins and reward, duties and obligations, building successful relationships and balancing the need in reaching for lofty ambitions and conditioning tangible discoveries, amongst many others.

A person who is mindful of his surroundings will surely take notable lessons from all those around him. He'll also become empathetic to the feelings of others, and this is an art not many people truly possess. Guided by Qur'ānic principles, this work is full of insights and wisdoms gleaned from the noble Prophetic Sunnah that endeavours to lead to personal virtue for those who genuinely seek it. Whether you're a person experiencing difficulties in life or wish to surge ahead in happiness, you will surely find timeless gems in this work that will aid you in your affairs.

There is a proverb that states, "It's not about how many books you read, rather, it's about how well you have understood them." Therefore, if you are fully cognisant of this work before you, then you will have done well in nurturing a mind-set that employs a depth of perspective and far-sightedness. These are rare ingredients necessary when dealing with perspectives requiring contemplation.

It is with great pleasure that we presents this wonderful work, with the hope it finds relevance in our own twenty first century lives. Last but not least, the Dār us-Sunnah team would like to extend heart-felt gratitude to all those involved in bringing this translation project to fruition. May Allāh make it a source of inspiration for all who come across it, *Amīn.*

T. Ḥusayn
England, UK
11th March 2018

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Ibn Jawzī

His Name and Lineage

He is Abū'l-Faraj Jāmal al-Dīn 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn al-Jawzī al-Qurashī al-Tamimi al-Bakrī from the family of Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr *al-Ṣiddīq*, al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī.[1]

His Birth and Upbringing

He was born in 509 or 510 A.H. Upon reaching adolescence, his aunt took him to Ibn Nāṣir from whom he learned a great deal. He came to love preaching while barely having reached the age of puberty, and from then started to give sermons to the people.

His father passed away when he was three years old so his aunt took care of him. His relatives were copper merchants so at times in hadith hearings he would write his name as 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī al-Ṣaffār [i.e.The Coppersmith].

---

[1] *Thail al-Rauḍatain*, p.21, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, p. 13/26.

His first ḥadīth hearing was in 756 A.H., as cited by al-Dhahabī.[2]

While still very young he became known as a religious person who would not socialise with anyone and would not eat from any food whose source was doubtful. He would only leave his house for prayer and he would not play with other children. He was a person of very high determination and ambition. He spent all his life busy in seeking knowledge, preaching and authoring.[3]

His Teachers

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī has already introduced his teachers in his book *Mashyakhat Ibn al-Jawzī* [i.e. the scholars who taught Ibn al-Jawzī] where he listed many of them. In the field of ḥadīth he benefitted from accompanying Ibn Nāṣir, in Qur'ān and *Adab* [i.e. Manners] from Sibt al-Khiyāt and Ibn al-Jawāliqī. He was the last to narrate from al-Dinawari and al-Mutawakkili.[4]

His Students

Those who narrated from him include his son and companion, the great scholar Muḥyī al-Dīn Yūsuf who was a teacher in the institute of al-Mustaʿsim billāh, his oldest son ʿAlī al-Nāsikh, his grandson, the preacher Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Farghalī al-Hanafī the author of *Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Mirror of Time), al-Ḥāfiẓ ʿAbd al-Ghanī, Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma, Ibn al-Dubaythī, Ibn al-Nājjar and al-Diyā.[5]

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[2] *Thail al-Rauḍatain*, 21, *Thail 'ala Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/401, *Shatharāt al-Thahab*, 4/330.

[3] *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 13/29, *Said al-Khāṭir*, 238.

[4] *Siyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā'*, 21/366, 367.

His Children

His grandson Abū al-Muẓfir and majority of those who wrote his biography say that he had three sons:

1. The oldest of them, Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: He became a jurist in the school of Aḥmad and took knowledge from Abū al-Waqt, Ibn Nāṣir, al-Armawī and a group of his father's teachers. He traveled to the city of al-Musul where he preached and held sermons there for which he earned the peoples full acceptance. It is said that the family of al-Zahrazurī used to be jealous of him so they made someone put poison in his drink which caused him to die in al-Mūsul in 554 A.H. during the lifetime of his father.[6]
2. Abū al-Qāsim Badr al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Nāsikh*
3. Abū Muḥammad Yūsuf Muḥyī al-Dīn[7]: He was the most

---

[5] *Siyar al-Aʿlām al-Nubulā'*, 21, 367.

[6] *Thail Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/430, 431.

* Publishers note: For a detail biography of him please refer to, *'The Sincere Council to the Seekers of Sacred Knowledge'*, by Ibn Jawzī, published by Dār as-Sunnah, Birmingham, UK, 2011.

[7] cf. *Siyar al-Aʿlām al-Nubulā'*, 23/372, *al-ʿIbar*, 5/237, *Duwal al-Islām*, 2/122, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 13/203, *Thail Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 2/258-261, *al-ʿUsjud al-Masbūk*, 635, *Shatharāt al-Thahab*, 5/286287, Ibn Shaṭṭī: *Mukhtasar Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, p.57.

intelligent and youngest son as he was born in 580 A.H. He became involved in preaching and held sermons after his father, in which he excelled and by which he was looked up to by his confreres. He then was appointed to control and supervise markets of Baghdād, and after that he was assigned to deliver the messages of the caliphs to kings of other different regions, particularly to the Ayyūbī family in the Shām region. He held the position of a teacher in the institute of caliph al-Mustā'sim in 640 A.H. till he was killed in prison in 656 A.H. by Hulaku who occupied Baghdād and destroyed it. His three sons Jāmal al-Dīn, Sharaf al-Dīn and Tāj al-Dīn were killed with him. He has authored many works, including *Mā'adin al-Abrīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz* and *al-Madhab al-Aḥmad fī Madhab Aḥmad.* Unlike his brother Abu al-Qāsim, he was a dutiful son who honored his father and treated him well.

His grandson mentioned that Ibn al-Jawzī had many daughters; Rabi'a, Sharaf al-Nisā', Zainab, Jauhara, Sitt al-'Ulama al-Sughra and Sitt al-'Ulama al-Kubrā.[8]

His Uniqueness as a Preacher

Excellent indeed are the words of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī about him: 'He was the leading figure in reminding the people and had no equal. He would recite pleasant poetry and eloquent prose spontaneously and his fine words and moving speech was abundant. There has never been anyone like him, not before him and not after him. He is the carrier of the flag of exhortation in its various forms. He had a pleasant appearance, a good voice and his lectures had an impact on peoples' hearts. His lifestyle in general was beautiful.'[9] He also said:

---

[8] *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, 8/503, Abū Shamma: *Thail al-Rauḍatain*, 26.

[9] *Siyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā'*, 21/367.

'I believe there will not be another one like him.'[10]

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab said: 'So we conclude that his gatherings of exhortation were one of a kind and nobody had heard of anything like them. They were gatherings of great benefit where the heedless would be reminded, the ignorant would come to know, the sinners would repent and the polytheists would become Muslims.'[11]

His Works and Effects

Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said in *al-Ajwiba al-Miṣriyyah*: 'Shaikh Abū'l-Faraj excelled in many sciences and has many writings to his account. He would write on many topics, and as I counted his works I found them to be over one thousand in number. Later, I came to know of other works also.'[12]

Having mentioned some of his books, al-Dhahabī said: 'I don't know of a scholar who has written what this man has.'[13]

The virtuous teacher 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-'Alūjī has written a book on his works which was printed in Baghdād in 1965. In this piece he researched their titles, their copies and copies that had been printed and put them in alphabetic order. Whoever wishes to know about these books should refer to this work, keeping in mind that many of the manuscripts mentioned therein by al-'Alūjī have now been printed.

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[10] *Siyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā'*, 21/384.

[11] *Thail Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/410.

[12] *Thail Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/415, *al-Tāj al-Mukallal*, 70.

[13] *Tathkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1344.

He authored approximately 300 books, some of his printed works include:

- *Talqih Fuhūm Ahli al-Athār fi Mukhtasarī al-Siyarī wal Akhbār.*[14] [Only a portion has been printed]
- *Al-Athkiyā' wa Akhbarahum.*[15] [Printed]
- *Manāqib 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz.*[16] [Printed]
- *Rawhu al-Arwāh.*[17] [Printed]
- *Shudhūr al-'Uqūd fi Tarikh al-'Uhūd.*[18] [Manuscript]
- *Zād al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsīr.*[19] [Printed]
- *Al-Muntadham fi Tārikh al-Mulūk wal Umam.*[20] [Only 6 volumes have been printed]
- *Al-Dhahab al-Masbūk fi Siyaril Mulūk.*[21] [Manuscript]
- *Al-Hamqa wal Mughaffalīn.*[22] [Printed]
- *Al-Wafa fi Fada'ili al-Mustafa.*[23] [Printed]
- *Manaqib 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.*[24] [Printed]

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[14] The book mentions the historical reports concerning the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions.

[15] A literature book in which he includes stories of intellectual people..

[16] The book details the virtues of the Caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz.

[17] The book explains the concept of spirit and spirituality

[18] An abridged version of the known history book *Tarikh al-Mulūk wal Umam.*

[19] The book explains the science of *Tafsir.*

[20] The book mentions the history of nations and kings.

[21] The book focuses on leaders and kings throughout history.

[22] A literature book in which he reports the stories of idiots and fools.

[23] The book relates the virtues of the Prophet (ﷺ).

[24] The book relates the virtues of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.

- *Manaqib Aḥmad ibn Hanbal.*[25] [Printed]
- *Gharīb al-ḥadīth.*[26] [Printed]
- *Al-Taḥqīq.*[27] [Only the first volume has been printed]

And also a considerable number of works in other fields of knowledge.

His Death

Ibn al-Jawzī (may Allah have on him) passed away on Friday the 12th of Ramaḍān in 597 A.H. He was buried next to the grave of Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal in the cemetery of Bāb Ḥarb.[28]

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[25] The book relates the virtues of Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal.

[26] The book explains one major aspect of the science of ḥadīth i.e. the gharīb ḥadīth.

[27] The book examines the authenticity of narrations used in the known book *'al-Ta'liq al-kabir'* of al-Qadi Abū Ya'la, and how classification of ḥadīth effected scholars views.

[28] For a more detailed biography of al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī, refer to: Ibn Athir's *al-Kamil,* 12/71, Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī: *Mir'at al-Zamān,* 8/481, al-Mundhirī: *al-Takmila,* Biography 608, al-Bāgghal: *al-Mashyakha,* 140, Abū Shāmma: *Thail al-Raudatain,* 21, Ibn al-Sā'i: *al-Jāmi',* 9/65, Ibn Khalkān: *al-Wafayāt,* 3/140, al-Dhahabī: *al-'Ibar,* 4/297, *Duwal al-Islām,* 2/79, *Tathkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ,* 4/1342, *Siyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā',* 21/365, Ibn Kathīr: *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah,* 13/26, Ibn Rajab: *Thail Tabaqāt al-Hanabila,* 1/399, al-Jazari: *Ghāyat wa'l-Nihāyah,* 1/375, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khan: *al-Tāj al-Mukallal,* 70, Ibn Shaṭṭī: *Mukhtasar Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila,* p. 42.

THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

Shaikh Jamāl al-Dīn, 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī said:

All praise is due to Allāh until He is pleased. May His absolute eternal peace and blessings be upon the most esteemed Prophet, whom He favoured [over all creation]. May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon all his Companions and supporters.

Our thoughts are apt to roam while exploring different things, yet thereafter such thoughts tend to be forgotten easily.

Therefore preserving one's thoughts should take priority over everything else in order to prevent them from escaping the mind. It was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Write down the knowledge."[1]

I had many thoughts that I did not record, and due to my preoccupation were forgotten, which makes me grieve.

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[1] Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*, 1/106.

Moreover, I noticed that whenever I open the eyes of contemplation, I sight incredible hidden notions and thoughts that never before crossed my mind. I therefore lavish such thoughts with discernment as they are too precious to be overlooked. It is for this reason I authored this book and made it a place wherein I place all my captured thoughts.

Indeed, Allāh is the Provider of all benefit; and He is ever-near (*qarīb*) and answering (*mujīb*).

CHAPTER ONE

The Hearts vary in the Susceptibility to [Religious] Exhortations

A person may hear an exhortation (*mawāʿiẓ*) or an influential sermon (*khutba*) that causes the heart (*qalb*) to be awakened (*yaqẓa*). However, as soon as he leaves the place of exhortation or where the sermon was delivered, the heart returns to its state of hardness (*qasāwa*) and heedlessness (*ghafla*). This being the case, I contemplated the reasons behind the quick change of the heart and I was successful in finding the answer.

I came to realise that the reason for the variation of the effect of [religious] exhortations and sermons on the heart is because the state of the heart prior to hearing them is different to its state at the time of hearing and after having heard them.

There are two reasons to explain this variation in the state of the heart and mind:

- The first of which is that the mechanism and effect of exhortations and reminders is similar to the effect of whips and lashes on people; the skin feels pain only when it is whipped but pain evaporates afterwards.

- The second reason is that both the mind and the heart at the time of hearing exhortations and sermons are detached from all worldly distractions, hence the heart listens attentively. However, as soon as he returns back to his normal life, his worldly affairs absorb his time, due to which he is unlikely to remain in the same condition he was upon while hearing the sermon.

The vast majority of people are exposed to this kind of effect whereas the heedful ones are affected differently when they are exposed to exhortations.

There is a group of people who are determined without having hesitation and proceed without a second thought. They become in a state of discomfort whenever their intrinsic nature stands in their way! This was the case of the companion Ḥandhalah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) who admonished himself by saying, 'Ḥandhalah has turned out to be a hypocrite.'[2]

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[2] Muslim, #2750. Ḥandhalah al-Usaydi (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), who was among the scribes of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) reported: 'I met Abū Bakr. He asked: 'Who are you?' I replied: 'Ḥandhalah has turned out to be a hypocrite'. Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) exclaimed: 'Glorified be Allāh, Why do you say such a thing?' 'Because whenever I am in the company of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) I ponder over Hell-Fire and Paradise as if I am seeing them with my very own eyes and when I am away from Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and return to my wife, my children and my business; most of these things (pertaining to the Hereafter) slip out of my mind', I answered. Abū Bakr said: 'By Allāh, I also experience the same.' So I and Abū Bakr went to Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and said to him: 'O Messenger of Allāh! Ḥandhalah has turned out to be a hypocrite'. Thereupon Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: 'What has happened to you?' I said: 'O Allāh's Messenger! When I am in your company, I am reminded of Hell-Fire and Paradise as if I see them with my own eyes, but whenever I go away from you and attend to my wife, children and business, much of these things go out of my mind.' Thereupon Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "If you were to continue in the state that you achieve in my presence, Angels would

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On the other hand, there are some people whose nature sometimes inclines them to heedlessness (*ghafla*) and so such exhortations entice them to sometimes act upon them, for which they become like a tuft standing in the path of wind!

With other people, the effect of reminders and exhortations on them vanishes by the time they finish hearing them, similar to how much time water would remain over a smoothened rock.

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have greeted you in your sittings and in the streets. O Ḥandhalah, time should be devoted to this (i.e. worldly affairs) and that (i.e. deeds and contemplation of the Hereafter).'"

CHAPTER TWO

Worldly Pleasures versus Pleasures of the Hereafter

Contrary to how the *'self'* perceives and reacts to the (mention and thoughts of) the Hereafter, mankind congenially inclines to the surrounding worldly pleasures, because the *'self'* finds such pleasures plentiful and attractive as they identify its wants. Whereas the *'self'* finds the mention of the Hereafter contravene its innate wants—aside from being intangible and unable to be quantified. It might be presumed by those who lack knowledge that attractions of the Hereafter are stronger and more influential than those of this worldly life considering the frequent warnings in the Qur'ān in this regard! In fact, it is the opposite of what these people presume.

[To explain further], the example of the innate nature of humans and its inclination to this worldly life is like running water that is always befitting to travel downward because going upward requires (strenuous) exertion.

For this reason, the Legislator responded to this matter with using the approach of encouragement (*tarqīb*)[3] and used intimidation (*tarhīb*)[4] to give strength to the soldiers of the mind. Given the existence of plentiful attractions in this world, it is not surprising for our innate nature to fall for such temptations. Rather, it is indeed more of a surprise (*'ajab*) to find the innate nature of humans succeeding in overcoming these attractions and thereby becoming tamed and controlled!

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[3] i.e. promises of reward

[4] i.e. warnings, admonishments and punishment

CHAPTER THREE

Anticipating the Consequences Guarantees Safety

He who observes the end of a matter at its beginning will reap its benefits and be saved from its evil. Whereas the one who does not observe the consequences [of his actions], as his own desires has control over his decisions, will harvest pain from where he sought safety and will endure discomfort from where he sought comfort (*rāḥa*).

If a person is therefore interested in understanding the outcome, his past should be recalled i.e. it is a fact that in your lifetime you must have disobeyed Allāh or obeyed Him! However, neither the pleasure that you attained from your sin nor the efforts that you exerted for performing the good deed still exist (at this point in time)!

This is because each act you performed in your lifetime is gone carrying with it all of what you had experienced at that time. Indeed, sinful desires never leave a person in a state of comfort as it brings forth nothing but regret and grief afterwards.

To elaborate further about this point, imagine that your time to depart the world has come and that it is the moment of your death.

Observe how much bitterness and grief you will have for neglecting your duties and overlooking any good deed during your lifetime. I, however, do not intend to address how such bitterness dismisses the taste of sweetness (*ḥalāwa al-ladhāt*) you had when you had fulfilled your sinful lusts and desires because such sweetness is apt to become a taste of bitterness, and it is the bitter regret that remains and lasts without anything to negate it (even after your death). Are you not aware that a matter is judged based on its consequences? You should heed the consequences [of your actions] in order for you to be safe, and do not incline towards your sinful desires *(hawā)* so you do not become regretful.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Comfort of Illusion [Worldly Pleasures]

He who contemplates (*tafakkur*) the consequences of this life will take all precautions. He who is certain of the long journey he is about to embark will be adequately prepared for travelling.

I wonder at a person who is certain of a matter yet still neglects it, and is confident of the harm of a matter yet still delves into it!

وَتَخۡشَى ٱلنَّاسَ وَٱللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَن تَخۡشَىٰهُۖ

> "You worry about mankind whereas Allāh had a better right that you should fear Him."
>
> [*al-Aḥzāb* (33):37]

[It is ironic that] your desirous self (*nafs*) provokes you to do what you are unsure of but you cannot win it over matters that you are certain of!

The wonder of all wonders is that you are pleased with your arrogance (*ghurūr*), and your indulgence into idle play while overlooking what has been hidden for you! You are fooled with your health and seem to forget that sickness is near; and you rejoice for your wellness all the while you fail to notice the pain that is yet to come. Verily, the death of others was just to remind you of your own death, and the death of others was only to remind you of your death! Your indulgence in fulfilling your desires averts you from remembering the destruction of your essence.

As one poet said,

As if you had not heard of the news of the people before,
and had not seen how time ruined those in the present.

If you did not know, then look at their ruins,
the wind and the grave erased their remains.

There is no house master that settled down in his grave without first being is removed from his house! How many palace lords have you seen being ruled by their enemies after they were removed from their positions!

O you who steps forward towards such an end, with every moment that passes, yet act as if he does not know or understand!

How can the heart sleep in tranquillity,
while not yet knowing whether it will dwell in
hell or heaven?

CHAPTER FIVE

Cautiousness is the Path to Safety

The closer one is to [events of] trials and tribulations (*fitnah*), the further he becomes from safety (*salama*), and he who claims endurance (*ṣabr*), [Allāh] will leave him alone [in the face of trials].

Just one [unlawful] gaze is enough to immediately hit the hearts with a poisoned arrow for truly the most deserving things to control and master over are the tongue and the eyes! Therefore you must beware of being overwhelmed with your intention (*'aẓm*) to abandon your fanciful-desires (*hawā*) and whims while you are stepping towards temptation and trials (*fitnah*) because fanciful-desires are duplicitous and nothing but a trap. Many are those who were audacious (*shujah*) in wars yet they were assassinated [abruptly] by a lowlife! And take the assassination of Ḥamzah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)[5] by Wahshi (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)[6] as an example!

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[5] Ḥamzah Ibn 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*); the uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ).

[6] Wahshi ibn Harb, the Abyssinian. He assassinated Ḥamzah Ibn 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*) in the battle of Uhud before he embraced Islām. He also killed Mūsāylama, a.k.a. the liar for proclaiming his prophecy after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), in the battle of Yamamah.

Be mindful and do not smell every lightning, for a lightning may have within it some thunder.

As one poet said,

Be mindful and do not track each lightening,
For a lightening may carry within destructive thunder.

Overlook and you shall be relieved from a [type of] love,
that makes you dress in a garment of humiliation.

The trial of a young boy is to follow his whims,
And the ambition of his eyes starts such kind of love.

CHAPTER SIX

Do not Let Pride in the Sin Take Hold of You

The greatest punishment is that he who has been punished is unaware of the fact that he is being punished. Even worse, is to be pleased of committing an act that is liable to, or deserving of, punishment such as being happy for earning money from unlawful sources, or for being capable of committing sins. Such a person with this condition will not be blessed with an act of obedience [i.e. good deed] to perform.

Contemplating the condition of the majority of people of knowledge (*ʿulamāʾ*) and ascetics (*mutaẓahdūn*) made me realise that these people are actually being punished without being aware of that! It is often that such punishment befalls them due their attempts and interest in seeking authority [i.e. power, fame, wealth and worldly benefits].

For instance, those who are described as scholars—among them—become irritated and frustrated whenever their mistakes are being corrected or refuted, and those who preach to people—among them—are actually phony in their sermons, and the ascetics—among them—are either hypocritical (*munāfiq*) or pretentious (*murā'*).

The first punishment befalling these [types of] people is that they become delinquent in finding the truth due to their concentration on people [i.e. they are focused on what people say about them and try to employ all means to have people on their side and follow them], and from amongst the hidden punishments they also suffer from is that they are deprived of tasting the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of invoking Allāh in secret and when worshipping Him. These punishments, however, befall not the believing men and women whom He preserves the earth with, whose actions conform to their hearts, if not better, whose inner is similar to their outer, if not better, and whose volition and endeavours are as high as the sky, if not higher. Whenever people recognise them, they deny possessing such qualities and keep a low profile, and if anyone finds out about any of their heaven-sent miraculous feats, they deny having such blessings. While people are heedless (*ghafla*) in this life, they are in their solitude [worshipping Allāh devoutly]; loved by the earth and rejoiced by the planets of heavens.

I ask Allāh, Most High, to grant us success to follow their steps and to make us amongst their followers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Perfection of the Human Intellect
(*kamil al-ʿaql*)

From the signs indicating the perfection of a person's intellect (*kamala al-ʿaql*) is his high aspiration (*ʿulu al-hima*)! This is because a person who is sufficed with the little is a toad.

One poet said,

> I have not seen a worse defect in people's characters than,
> being imperfect when they are capable of being perfect.

CHAPTER EIGHT

They Love Allāh and He Loves them

Exalted be He whose Love (*maḥabah*) to His slaves precedes their love of Him. He praises them for the graces that He has already granted them. He rewards them for what He already provided them. He values their imperfect traits just because He favours them; thus, He parades them for their fasting and declared that the bad smell resulting from their fasting is beloved to Him!

Indeed, how astonishing and highly-ranked status it is; neither can it be achieved by any endeavourer nor be described by any eloquent speaker.

CHAPTER NINE

Prepare for what Comes After Death

It is a must for each cautious and intelligent person to gather the supplies needed before his departure [from this life]. For he never knows when his hour of death will strike or know when his soul will be called back!

Numerous are the number of people whom I witnessed that were befooled by their youthfulness. They forgot the loss of their peers, and were manipulated by their longing hopes (*tul al-amal*) thinking [that they will live long].

A scholar may say to himself, 'Today, I will occupy myself with learning (*'ilm*) and then practice what I have learnt the day after!' But then he becomes lenient with his shortcomings on the grounds that needs to have a rest, and delays taking all that is need to establish his repentance (*tawbah*). Moreover, he neither avoids backbiting (*ghiba*) or listening to the backbiting of others nor does he mind earning money from dubious sources, in the hope all these sins will be erased with piety (*wara'*). All the while, he forgets that death may strike him at any moment.

The intelligent person is one who minds the duty necessitated by every moment of his life, so that if death strikes, he already knows that he is prepared and ready. If he lives longer than what was expected, he will be able to increase the balance of his good deeds.

CHAPTER TEN

Calamities befalls People according to their Sins

I thought about the calamities and great trials—whose severity is unbearable—befalling most of the people! "Free of all defects is He! Allāh is indeed the Most Generous, such superior generosity entails easiness and forgiveness. Thus how is that such catastrophes and hardships are still occurring?" I exclaimed.

After some thought, I came to realise that despite the existence of many people they live as nonexistent objects, for they neither explore the evidences of the Oneness of Allāh (*waḥdaniyya*) nor look into His commandments. Rather, they live as per their fanciful desires and are preoccupied with satisfying their physical drives and appetites just like animals.

Furthermore, whenever their desires and whims contravene the divine law, the former takes precedence over the latter, and all they care about is how to earn money regardless of whether the money was originated from lawful or unlawful sources. As for praying, whenever *ṣalah* is made easy for them they would pray, otherwise they would abandon it. Moreover, some of them would publically disclose their major sins even though they are aware of the nature of the One Who forbid such sins. In fact, some of them may have genuine knowledge about Allāh, but their sins increase from worse to worse!! For this reason, I now understand that worldly punishments, even when they are severe, are still less serious than the crimes those people committed.

Therefore, when one of them is punished for a sin he committed, such a person cries out in contempt, 'Oh God, for what sin have I deserved this punishment?' And forgets his previous sins for which the earth would shake due to the greatness of such sins.

It is possible that an old man is humiliated, despite his old age, to the level that people feel sorry for him while he does not realise that what he suffers at old age is because of his negligence to Allāh's rights when he was at a youthful age.

Thus, whenever you see someone is being punished, know that this punishment is due to a sin that he previously committed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Contrast between the Scholars of the world and the Scholars of the Hereafter

I have contemplated on the issue of envy (*hasad*) among scholars, and I noticed that such dreadful feelings originate from their love (*hubb*) of this worldly life, because the scholars of the Hereafter are kind-hearted and do not envy each other. Allāh, Most High, said:

وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ أُوتُوا۟

> "And those who harbour no jealousy in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given."
>
> [*al-Hashr* (59):9]

and

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَآءُو مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لَنَا
وَلِإِخْوَٰنِنَا ٱلَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِٱلْإِيمَٰنِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا
غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟

> "And those who came after them, say, 'O our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and do not let our hearts entertain [any] resentment [or feelings]

> against [any of] those who have believed. Our Lord, You are the Most Kind, Most Merciful.'"
>
> [*al-Hashr* (59):10]

Abū'l-Dardā' (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) used to supplicate every night to Allāh—the Most High—for his companions.

Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal said to the son of Imām al-Shāfi'ī: 'Your father is one of the six people, I have been asking Allāh every night to reward.'

The difference between the two types of scholars [i.e. scholars whose interest is in worldly life and scholars whose is interest is in the Hereafter] is that on one hand, scholars whose interest is in worldly pleasures are [only] interested in authority and fame that such scholarship entails. They are only concerned with having followers, receiving praises and compliments. On the other hand, the scholars of the Hereafter do not only abstain from all that, but also fear it happening to them and feel pity for those who are afflicted with it.

Al-Nakh'ī never [accepted] to sit [in the *masjid*] while his back is against any of the Masjid's columns [i.e. fearing that people may think he is sitting there to give a talk and so they would come and sit with him].

'Alqamah used to say: 'I dislike people to come and sit with me, then leave while talking about me.'

Some of them would even go to the extent to leave the place at where they are sitting as soon as they notice that more than four people are sitting with them.

Not only do they redirect people to another qualified scholar to avoid giving *fatwa* [as they did not wish to attract the attention of others] but they assured to keep a low profile.

The example of these [scholars of the Hereafter] is like someone sailing in a boat in the middle of a troubled sea; hence he keeps himself busy with his own condition until he is certain of his safety.

They always invoke Allāh for each other and take benefit from each other's [knowledge]. They are a group of travellers who chose to accompany and love each other.

Therefore the days and nights become their ride in their journey to Paradise (*jannah*).

CHAPTER TWELVE

Allāh will not Change the Condition of a People Until they Change what is in Themselves

Whoever wants to change and purify (*tasfiya*) his heart should endeavour to purify his deeds. Allāh, the Most High, said:

وَأَلَّوِ ٱسْتَقَٰمُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

> "If only they had remained firmly on the straight path,
> We would have given them abundant rain."
>
> [*al-Jinn* (72):16]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said narrating from His Lord, "If My slaves were obedient to Me, I would have let rain fall in the night and sun rise in the day and never made them hear the sound of thunder"[7]

And he (ﷺ) also said, "Goodness is never worn out, sins are never forgotten, the Questioner [i.e. Allāh] is never asleep, and as per what you do, you shall be rewarded or punished."[8]

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[7] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 2/359, Ḥākim in *al-Musdarak*, 2/380 and others—weak report.

Abū Sulaymān al-Darānī said, 'Whoever purifies his heart, his life will be serene accordingly and whoever debases his hearts, his life will be troubled accordingly. Whoever does a good deed in the night, will receive its reward in the daytime and whoever does a bad deed in the daytime, will receive its punishment in the night-time.'

[It was also said that] there was an old man who used to attend people's gatherings and assemblies and say to them, 'He who wants his safety to last should fear Allāh, Most High.'

Al-Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyāḍ used to say, 'If I disobey Allāh, I reckon its effect in the behaviour of my wife and the camel I ride.'

Know, may Allāh direct you to success, that a numb person can never sense a sting. It is only the one who holds himself accountable can recognize the difference when a change happens to him. That being said, whenever you notice your life is being disturbed and changed, then recall a grace you have not thanked Allāh for or a sin you have previously committed.

Be aware of the disappearance of grace and the surprise of punishment and do not misunderstand the tolerance of Allāh [regarding your sins] for He may show His anger sooner than you think. Allāh, Most High, said:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

> "Indeed, Allāh will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."
>
> [*al-Ra'd* (13):11]

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[8] *Musannaf* of 'Abdu'l-Razzāq, 11/178, *al-Zuhd* of Ibn Abī 'Āsim, 1/142 and other. It is weak see *Da'if al-Jami'*, #2369

Abū 'Alī Arruthbārī used to say, 'It is a great misunderstanding to decide not repenting when you commit a sin then think you are forgiven because Allāh showed kindness to you afterwards.'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Enigmas Baffling the Bewildered

I have thought about the concept of duties that Allāh ordained upon us and noticed that duties are of two categories; duties that are easy to fulfil and duties that are difficult to fulfil. The former includes the deeds performed by body limbs, though such acts differ in terms of the levels of easiness. For example, ablution (*wuḍū'*) and prayer (*ṣalāh*) are easier to do than fasting, and fasting might be easier to do than charity (*zakah*) for some people. The latter—that is the category of difficult duties—is of different levels of difficulties too as some acts are more difficult to do than other acts.

For instance, the process of observation and deducing through which a person comes to realise and acquire the knowledge about the Creator is more difficult to do by those whose materialism over powers them and easier to do by the people of sensibility and [sound] reasoning.

It is also found difficult to resist fanciful-desires (*hawā*), suppress the *'self'* (*nafs*) and withhold the hands of one's nature from acting according to what it favours. All this however is easy to do by the intelligent ones who anticipate the reward afterwards; even if it was difficult to do at the time.

The most difficult but considered the most amazing duty of all is that the sense of intellect (*ʿaql*) is convinced that the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) of the Creator is factual and evident. Then, we see those whose lives are devoted to worship (*ʿibādah*) Him and learning the religious knowledge (*ʿilm*), suffer extreme poverty (*faqr*) to the extent that they may endure humiliation while seeking their provision from ignorant (*jāhil*) people. The sinner (*fāsiq*), on the other hand, enjoys extreme wealth despite of his ignorance (*jahl*).

Furthermore, we see how He creates the body to grow from being young to perfectly formed and strong, and then He ruins it, in the blink of an eye, to return it to being fragile and weak. We also notice how children endure pain until humans of all kinds feel merciful to them.

But then, we are told not to even doubt that He is the Most Merciful!

He informs us of the story of [Prophet] Mūsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) and Pharaoh then commands us to believe that Allāh, Exalted is He, misguided Pharaoh and that Adam was predestined to eat from the tree, but nevertheless we find that he was blamed for what he did in the verse:

وَعَصَىٰٓ ءَادَمُ رَبَّهُۥ

"And Adam disobeyed His Lord."

[*Ṭāhā* (20):121]

Such events and thoughts have caused confusion for some people that resulted in them disbelieving (*kufr*) and denying (*taqthīb*) the truth. However, if they bothered to research about the wisdom of such things they would have realised that these observations exist for the mind to submit to Allāh [as the wisdom behind such events is beyond mind's limit]. This is a principle [of a great importance] that assures safety (*salama*) and submission (*taslīm*) if understood.

I ask Allāh, Most High, to reveal to us the secret of the mysteries that have confused those who were misguided, for indeed, He is near (*qarīb*) and answering (*mujīb*).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Value of Time

Every person should be aware of the importance and value of time. So that he wastes none and benefits from every moment [of his life] to draw nearer and closer to Allāh. Start with the best of words (*qawl*) and actions (*'amal*) then the lesser in virtue and so forth.

The intention (*niyya*) to indulge in good deeds that he is capable of should be maintained and active all the time. Because an intention to do a good deed might be better than actually doing a good deed as reported in the ḥadīth, "The intention of the believer is better than his deed."[9]

Many people from the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) were known to take advantage of their time and cautious about how to spend it. [The following are some examples illustrating the high level of appreciation that the righteous predecessors gave to time]:

It has been reported that a man once said to 'Āmir Ibn 'Abdu'l-Qais: 'Converse with me.' 'Amir replied: '[Only if you could] hold the sun' [i.e. stop the time so that I talk with you].

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[9] Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 6/5942, Bayhaqī in *al-Shu'b*, 5/343 and he said the isnād is weak. See also *al-Ḍa'ifah*, #2216.

The son of Thābit al-Bananī narrated: 'When my father was on his death bed I sat next to him to ensure his last words to be 'There is no god worthy of worship except Allāh.' However, as I was about to do so, he interrupted me by saying, 'O son, leave me alone for I am now busy doing my sixth portion of prayers (*dhikr*).'

When some people entered upon a dying person from the righteous predecessors they found him praying, so they blamed him [i.e. they admonished him from exhausting himself while he is on his death bed]. But he responded, 'my book in which my deeds are recorded will be closed shortly' [i.e. I would like to take advantage of my last moments to do more good deeds before I can no longer perform any more].

That being the case, when a person understands that death will terminate his good deeds, though he may be one of those who endeavoured much to do many good deeds, he will still take advantage of his lifetime to do good deeds that their reward will remain in effect and generated after his death. If he owned some properties or wealth he would endow something, plant a tree, dig a river, or endeavour to have offspring who remember Allāh after his death, so that the reward of all that be given to him afterwards, or authoring a book about a topic related to the religious knowledge for indeed the work of a scholar is their immortal child. Or be amongst those who perform good deeds, and do them well so that others observe these good deeds from him and start following his lead. A person with such qualities is a person who never dies.

Indeed there are many people who have died while they are still alive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Honour of Sufficiency (*ghina*) and the Danger of Destitution (*faqr*)

One of the most deceitful tricks (*ḥil*) and deceptions (*maqr*) of *Shayṭān* that I have observed is its attempts to ruin the affluent with possessing long wishful hopes and indulging in worldly pleasures which distract them from the Hereafter and its deeds.

As *Shayṭān* succeeds to attach people's hearts to collect and earn money, he then entices them guard it by keeping it unspent. Turning them into misers (*bākhil*), which proves a guile that demonstrates the *Shayṭān*'s skilfulness in deluding people. It does not even stop there as *Shayṭān* then conceals within this deception further perverted tricks i.e. he reverses this trick with the believers by making them careless to earn and collect money. So he made those living for the Hereafter become undesirous of money, and made those who repent to hasten to give away all what in their possession.

Shayṭān afterwards continues his deception by disguising himself as a sincere advisor who cares for people's religion, so he encourages the believers to be undesirous of worldly pleasures, to give them up, and frightens them from taking paths from which they could earn money. This is indeed one of his dazzling hidden deceptions!

It is possible that *Shaytān* lures some Shaikhs, whom are highly respected by the repenting persons, to advise them saying, 'give away all your wealth and join the group of ascetics (*zuhhād*)! And know that whenever you have a meal to eat at lunch or dinner then you no longer belong to the group of ascetics and will not achieve the high ranks.'

Then such sheikhs may even quote them fabricated ḥadīths or misquote other ḥadīths that have been said for different reasons and purposes.

When someone falls for this deception and as a result gives away his wealth and quits the means from which he earns his source of income. *Shaytān* starts making him hope to receive aid from his friends, or beautifies for him accompanying the ruler (to gain some benefit). This is because *Shaytān* knows that he will not tolerate such a hard life except for few days because afterwards, his wishful nature will overpower him again and thus making his affairs worse than the affairs he tried to escape from in the first place. Eventually, the first thing he would compromise is his religion and honour [in order to receive all that he needs to sustain himself], and would turn into a recipient instead of being a giver.

If this person had looked into the affairs and life stories of true men, the nobles, and contemplated authentic ḥadīths concerning their masters, he would have known that Prophet Ibrāhim (*'alayhi as-salām*) was extremely rich to the level his cattle were too many to be held in his town.

Likewise, Prophet Lūṭ (*'alayhi as-salām*) was not a different case and so were many other Prophets, let alone mentioning many Companions who were also known of as being affluent and wealthy. The case with these men is that they were patient when they had nothing and sought the lawful means to earn what made them in no need for anyone's charity, not to mention that none of them ever abstained from eating what is lawful when it was available.

Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) used to trade during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), and many of them used to receive aid from *Bayt al-Māl* (Islāmic Welfare System) and would donate whatever is left with them after covering their basic living needs just so they do not need to beg others for aid.

Ibn ʿUmar (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhumā*) used to accept whatever he was offered and also would never ask anyone for anything.

Most of the religious and the people of knowledge whom I contemplated their affairs, seem to fall in this trap; I found them too busy learning and studying to earn money in the beginning so that when they advanced and needed money to cover their basic living expenses they humiliated themselves, even though they are the most deserving for glory and pride.

In old times, the financial aid received from *Bayt al-Māl* used to suffice them and make in no need to receive the donations of those they knew. However, as *Bayt al-Māl* is no longer able to cover their needs in our times, religious people had nothing to compromise except their religion and I wish they calculated the risk! Even worse, it could happen that they comprise their religion and yet receive no benefit.

For this reason, an intelligent person should preserve and maintain his wealth and possessions. Work hard to earn money that suffices him so he does not end up in a position where he has to slither up to an oppressor or play along with an ignorant.

Thus, one should never pay attention to the trivial and extremism of some ascetics who claim that poverty is of a high status, for indeed, poverty is nothing but a disease (*maraḍ*) of inflicts the helpless (*ʿajz*) and the powerless.

As for the one who endures poverty, he will receive the reward of a person who is patient (*ṣābir*) with sickness, except in the case where he is unwilling to take any action and is content with being poor, as this does not represent a rank of championship; rather it represents a rank of cowardice ascetics.

In contrast, he who earns money to be a giver instead of being a receiver is a noble champion without any doubt. And whoever contemplates all this will surely realise the danger of poverty and the nobility of sufficiency.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Do Not Grieve for What You Have not Been Given

When I thought of the life conditions of respected men (*ahlu'l-fuḍalā'*), I noticed that, often, most of them were not given a good share of worldly pleasures, whereas, in most cases, worldly pleasures are given to disesteemed people whose characters are defected.

Then I noticed that [some of] those respected men self-rebuke themselves over what they do not have, yet is found in the possession of those disrespected ones, to the extent that some of them may go into extreme sorrow due to that.

I conversed with some of those who grieve over what they do not have and said, "Woe to you! Should you have contemplated your affairs, you would have realised that you are mistaken from many aspects:

First: If you have any interest in achieving anything in this life that is attainable and within your capacity and power then you should take the means to achieve it. Only then will you overcome such a disturbing feeling. Otherwise, being inactive and unhappy about not having what others have, though you are capable of having it, is an ultimate weakness from your side.

Second: This life is set so we pass through it and not so we settle down in it, which is a conclusion that is factual enough for your cognition and intellect to accept.

Needless to add, the surplus enjoyed by the lowlifes, in reality, causes harm to their bodies and religion. Thus, if you know all that, yet are still unhappy for not having what you are better off without, then know that such a concern is indeed a punishment because you are sad for not having what you know will harm you. So bear this as your immediate punishment if ever you are saved from the awaiting punishment.

Third: You know that in general the proportion of human's enjoyment and share of worldly pleasures is minimal compared to the enjoyment and share of animals. This is because contrary to the case of humans, animals receive larger quantities without enduring the troublesome or worrying about losing any of that.

Thus, when your share of worldly pleasures is doubled it would put you in a similar position of animals since this will distract you from seeking good virtuous deeds. The fewer loads a person carries in this life, the more a person is encouraged to seek a higher rank with Allāh. That being the case, if you are still after, worldly pleasures despite your knowledge that human's share of worldly pleasure is little, then you must know that you have mocked the facts you know and so insulted your own intellect and proved that you are a confused person.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Types of Sinners

After I contemplated how the learned ones (*'ulamā'*) comply with the forbidden fanciful-desires (*shahawāt*) and whims, I came to the conclusion that such state would be similar to the position of disbelief (*kufr*). However, [I could not generalize such ruling as I realised that] the learned ones who are involved in prohibited acts are of different types;

Some of them do not know that such an act is prohibited at the time of doing it, and this group is condoned.

Some of them think a prohibited act is only to be disliked (and hence no sin results for doing it); this group is similar to the first group. Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) can be considered as one of this group (when he ate from the forbidden tree).

Some of them misconstrue a command just as it is the case with Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) as it was said that he was commanded not to eat from a particular tree, so he ate from a tree of the same kind and not from the particular forbidden tree.

Some of them know that an act is forbidden yet they become overpowered by their lusts and desires and hence become too helpless to remember that it is sinful because the lusts and unlawful adornments they come across distract them from what they already know.

For this reason, when someone steals he does not recall that the punishment of his sin is the cutting off of his hand. Rather, he would be in a state of mind focused on taking what he intends to steal. Similarly, when someone fornicates he neither recalls the scandal or the set punishment because he is overwhelmed with his lust.

Some of them know and recall the command to abstain from sins at the time of committing the sin but depend on their longing hope that they will be forgiven. Though, it is true that Allāh is Most Merciful but an intelligent wise person should always be resolute in his affairs and calculate the consequences of his actions, particularly when he knows that the Legislator ordered to cut the hand even when one steals a quarter of a *dinār*, and to stone a body to death for a pleasure he enjoyed for one hour [or less]. The same reasoning applies on those who committed sins and hence were punished with deformation, drowning or earthquakes etc.[10]

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[10] Pointing to the verses in the Qur'ān, "*And [We destroyed] Qarun and Pharaoh and Hāmān. And Mūsā had already come to them with clear evidences, and they were arrogant in the land, but they were not out runners [of Our punishment]. So each We seized for his sin; and among them were those upon whom We sent a storm of stones, and among them were those who were seized by the blast [from the sky], and among them were those whom We caused the earth to swallow, and among them were those whom We drowned. And Allāh would not have wronged them, but it was they who were wronging themselves.*" [*al-'Ankabūt* (29): 39-40]

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Scale of Justice Knows No Favouritism

Whoever contemplates the Actions of the Creator (*Afʿāl al-Bārī*), Exalted is He, will see such acts manifesting the law of justice (*ʿadl*), and will become aware that His Punishment will occur sooner or later; therefore, no sinner should be fooled for not being punished because punishment might be postponed.

Among the grievous sins for which a great punishment is promised is when a person insists on committing a sin then follows it with insincere begging for Allāh's forgiveness (*istighfār*) along with praying (*ṣalah*) and good deeds (*taʿbbad*), thinking that being pretentious is beneficial.

The most befooled person of all people is he who does an act that Allāh despises or is displeased with then asks Him for things he likes or wants, as reported in the ḥadīth when the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The helpless one is he who submits to his desires then wishes Allāh to grant him what he wants."[11]

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[11] Tirmidhī, #2459, Ibn Mājah, #4260, *Musnad* Aḥmad, 4/124 and others. See *Ḍaʿīf Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, #2459.

The intelligent one therefore should always be waiting for the punishment to take place anytime!

Ibn Sireen said, 'I once belittled a man by calling him a destitute then after forty years from that incident I also became broke.'

Ibn al-Jalla' said, 'A Shaikh saw me once looking at a beardless man, he said to me, 'What are you doing! You will surely find the consequences of this act later'. Then, I ended up forgetting the Qur'ān [I memorized] after forty years from that incident."

In contrast, whoever does a good deed or corrected an intention should also wait for the reward sooner or later. Allāh, Most High, said,

إِنَّهُۥ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

> "Indeed he who fears Allāh and is patient, then indeed, Allāh does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12): 90]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever lowers his gaze so he does not see the adornment of a woman [whom he is unlawful to look at], Allāh shall reward him with faith (*īmān*) that he will taste its sweetness in his heart"[12]

Thus, an intelligent person should know that the scale of justice knows no lenience and no favouritism.

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[12] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 5/264, Bayhaqi, 4/5431 and others on the authoritiy of Abū Umamah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*). It is a weak report. See *Mishkāt al-Maṣibih*, #3124.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Facts of Life in the Scale of Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Ignorance (*jahl*)

Upon contemplating the state of ascetics (*zuhhād*) and the Ṣūfīs, I noticed that most of their practices are deviated and astray from the Islāmic guidance either due to their ignorance (*jahl*) in religion, or innovation resulting from originated personal opinions i.e. they rely on verses (*āyāt*) they do not understand and ḥadīths they take out of context though most of the ḥadīths they use are proven unauthentic.

For instance, they heard that Allāh said,

وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا مَتَٰعُ ٱلْغُرُورِ ١٨٥

"The life of this world is but comfort of illusion."
[*Āl-ʿImrān* (3):185]

and

أَنَّمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ

"The life of the world is but matter of illusion."
[*al-Ḥadīd* (57):20]

Then they heard that the Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "By Allāh, this world is more insignificant in the eye of Allāh as this dead lamb is in your eye."[13] Hence, they exaggerated in abstaining from worldly pleasures without looking into the reality and actual purpose of these worldly pleasures. For indeed when the reality of a matter is unknown, it can neither be praised nor criticized.

However, if we investigate the reality and truth of this worldly life, we will see this earth; upon which the creation survives, from which food sustenance is produced, and underneath its layers the deceased are buried.

We therefore know that such beneficial qualities cannot be condemned. Further, we see that it has water, crops, and animals that all were made to serve the interests of humans and assist them to survive. Then we see that the life and survival of humans is a means whereby they come to know their Creator, to obey Him and serve Him. For this reason, when something serves as a means by which the survival of a worshipper (*'abid*) who knows his Lord is ensured, it should be praised and valued, not be looked down upon. From this it becomes evident that condemnation and criticism of worldly life is actually referring to the acts of the ignorant and living disobeyers. This is because when a person possesses his wealth from lawful sources then pays the zakāt he cannot be criticized in this regard.

The wealth left behind by Al-Zubayr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) and 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) were magnificent.

The charity (*ṣadaqah*) that 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) paid was forty thousand.

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[13] Muslim, #2957, Tirmidhī, #2321, Ibn Mājah, #41111 and others on the authority of Shadād Ibn Aws (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*). See *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Tirmidhī.*

The wealth left behind by Ibn Mas'ūd (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) reached ninty thousand.

Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd used to have a farm that generates harvest of a value of twenty thousand every year.

Sufyān [Ibn Thawrī] had his own business and Ibn al-Mahdī used to trade with two thousand *dinār.*

Similarly, when a person marries more than one wife and possesses many slave-women he should not be looked down upon; on the contrary, he should be praised because the Prophet (ﷺ) had many wives and possessed slave-women and so did most of the Companions.

'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) married four wives and had fourteen slave-women, and his son al-Hasan married almost four-hundred wives.[14] That being the case, when marriage is sought to have children, it is therefore becomes the supreme level of worship, and when marriage is sought for pleasure, it is considered just lawful but nonetheless it still contains numerous rewards as it ensures guarding the chastity of his wife and himself and more.

Prophet Mūsā (*alayhi as-salām*) spent ten years of his noble life to pay the gift-wedding of the daughter of Shu‘ayb. Thus, if marriage was not amongst the best acts, Prophets would not have excessively practiced it.

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[14] He always had no less than four wives as he used to marry another after divorcing any of his four wives. He used to gift each one he divorced plenty of money to compensate her from the divorce. Despite all that, all his women deeply loved him and praised him even after being divorced and women still wanted to be married to him regardless. He excelled in manners as a noble man and as a husband, let alone he was known of his intellect, piety and resemblance of the manners and appearance of the Prophet (ﷺ). It was explained that he used to divorce his wives only when they err and he used to dislike retreating his decision, which is something that his father criticized and advised people not to accept his marriage proposals. In any case, he used to gift the divorced a great amount of money though he is not required to do so.

Ibn ‘Abbās (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhumā*) said, ‘The best of nations is the one whose women are the most.’[15] And he used to sleep with one of his slave-females and spend the night with another one.

The slave-female of al-Rabī‘ Ibn Khuthaym said: ‘Al-Rabī‘ used to do coitus interrupts [when sleeping with his women].’

As for food, the purpose of it is strengthening the body to serve Allāh, Exalted is He, for he who has a camel should feed it so it can carry him!

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to eat meat whenever it is available, and also ate chicken,[16] and the most loved type of food to his heart was sweets and honey.[17] Further, it was not reported that he ever abstained from a lawful food [to draw nearer to Allāh or for religious reasons].

When ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*) was offered a meal called al-Faloudhaj [i.e. a meal made of wheat and honey], he ate from it then asked: ‘What is the occasion for serving this?’They said: ‘Today is the day of Nairouz’[18] so he said: ‘Let everyday be a Nairouz day then [i.e. so we eat this meal].’ This is because the things that are religiously disliked are to eat beyond one's replete and to dress to flaunt and exhibit oneself.

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[15] Bukhārī, #5069 on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhumā*).

[16] Bukhārī, #5517-5518, Muslim, #1649, #1668 on the authority of Abū Mūsā (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*).

[17] Bukhārī, #5431, #4912 on the authority of ‘Ā’ishah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhā*).

[18] It means the first day of the year

However, some people were content with the minimal of all that because clear lawfulness is almost impossible to achieve from what one wants. Nonetheless, the Prophet (ﷺ) put on a garment that was gifted to him and its price was twenty-seven camels, and Tameem Al-Darī (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhu*) had a garment that he bought for one-thousand *dirham* to wear it when praying at night. But, afterwards, a group of people emerged exhibiting asceticism, and inventing a new way that their whims had beautified for them. Then they started looking for proofs to support their way while a person should follow the evidence and not follow a way then find a proof to support it. Later on, this group divided into many groups;

Some of them show asceticism outwardly while being excessively desirous inwardly, relishing their desires in secret and basking in all worldly pleasures. They exhibit their asceticism with their appearance and clothes while, in fact, they have no asceticism except for the garment they wear because when looking into their affairs and life conditions it will be found that they have the arrogance and pride of Pharaoh.

Some of them have sincere hearts but lack the knowledge in religion.

Some of them stepped forward to lead others and authored books which made the ignorant follow their ways and they became like a blind person leading another blind person. If they however spent some time to reflect upon the way of life of the first generation; the way upon which was the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhum*), they would not have gone astray.

That is why a group of investigating exegetes pay no attention to how much people esteem and glorify a person as that never stopped them from criticizing any of them if any of them deviates from the correct path. It was related that al-Marwazī asked [Imām] Aḥmad: 'What do you say about marriage?' He answered: 'It is the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ).' So he replied: 'But Ibrāhīm said...' Imām Aḥmad interrupted him and shouted at him saying: 'Do you bring us trivial statements?'

He was once informed that Sari al-Saqti said: 'When Allāh created letters, the letter *Alif*[19] stood up and the letter *Bā*[20] prostrated.' He said, 'Discourage people from sitting with him.'

Know that an investigating exegete, whose endeavours aim at verifying the truth, is neither frightened nor intimidated by a person whose status is high or glorified by people. This is why when a man said to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*): 'Do you really think that we could believe that Ṭalḥah and Al-Zubayr were wrong?' He replied, 'Take not the men as criterion of the truth but take the truth as criterion of the men.'

It is indeed a surprise to see how people praise and hold high esteem to some persons, so that when the ignorant [i.e. he who has no profound religious knowledge] hears of what some narrate about them, he would accept it unconditionally due to his admiration of such a person. For instance, it was related that Abū Yazīd (the ascetic) once said, 'My '*self*' rebelled once [i.e. desired what I do not accept for it to have] so I made an oath not to drink water for one year.' If this report happened to be true then he did a despicable mistake and a fatal error because water abates food into the body and there is no such alternative with such capacity, therefore, not drinking water shall harm the body. Needless to mention, that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to have fresh water to drink.[21]

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[19] The 1st letter of the Arabic alphabet.

[20] The 2nd letter in the Arabic alphabet.

Having said that, do you think that such behaviour can be from a person who knows that his body and his soul are not his, and so he has no authority to function it except with the permission of its owner.

Similar stories are also reported from some Ṣūfī, one of which relates that one Ṣūfī said, ‘I walked to Makkah bare-footed while having full reliance on Allāh so that when a thorn entered my foot I would scratch it with the floor and not lift it up. And I was wearing wool so when my eye hurt me I would rub it with the wool and because of that one of my eyes went blind.’

The examples of such behaviour are many, which story tellers present to people as if these are from the miracles given to these ascetics, causing them to let laypeople glorify such stories to the point that people may think that whoever does such a thing is higher in rank than Imām al-Shāfi'ī or Imām Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal] while, in fact, such acts are from the vilest flaws and one of the greatest sins. [This is because such behaviours fails to comply with both Qur'ān and Sunnah] Allāh, Exalted is He, said,

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا أَنفُسَكُمْ

“Do not kill yourselves.”

[*al-Nisā'* (4):29]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Your body has a due right upon you”[22], and during the immigration journey from Makkah to Madīnah, Abū Bakr (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*) searched for shade for the Prophet (ﷺ) until he found shade from a rock so he arranged it for him.[23]

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[21] Abū Dāwūd, #3735, Ḥākim, 4/138 and others on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhā*).

[22] Bukhārī, #1153 and Muslim, #1159 on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu*)

The beginning of such deviancy goes back to the old times, which was due to the main reason: lack of knowledge (*al-jahl bi'l-ʿilm*) and the remaining influence of [Christian] monasticism (*qurb al-ʿahd bi'l-rahbaniyya*) at that time.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī used to criticize the level of asceticism of Farqad al-Sabkhī and Mālik Ibn Dinār as he once had a meal including meat, so he made a comment, 'This is neither the two pieces of bread of Mālik nor the plates of Farqad.' He also said to Farqad when he saw him wearing a sheet [i.e. poor sheet indicating his asceticism]: 'O Farqad, beware for most of the dwellers of hellfire are those who wear such sheets!'

Many story-tellers (*quṣṣas*) often attract the attention of their audience by mentioning stories of people who travelled without having any food or water, without knowing that such practice is despicable and admonished, let alone that Allāh, Most High, is not to be used for people's experiments! It is possible that an ignorant person who has just repented hears such stories and then decides to do the same so he dies on his journey making the one who narrated such stories has his share of the burden of his sin.

They often narrate the story of Dhū'l-Nūn with the travelling woman whom he met and conversed with her while forgetting the authentic ḥadīth that state "It is unlawful for a woman to travel alone for the period of a day and a night except in the company of a *Maḥram.*"[24]

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[23] Bukhārī, #3652 and Muslim, #2009 on the authority of al-Barā' (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

They also keep narrating the stories of people who walked on water though Ibrāhim al-Harbi declared that 'It is never true that a person walked on water.' But when they hear this kind of statements they hasten to say, 'Do you deny the miracles of the pious awliyā'?' To this we reply, 'Of course not! But, we follow only what has been proven true and correct because the pious are those who follow the teachings and laws of this religion and not the ones who worship Allāh as per their own opinions.' It was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "When Bani-Isrā'il made it strict on themselves, Allāh made His law strict on them."[25]

The story tellers and ascetics encourage people to be in a state of poverty until they made some people give away all their wealth and then eventually become either destitute (i.e. begging people for aid) or one complaining whenever they are in need. Many are those who were harmed because of following their advice to reduce their share of food and water though the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Leave one third of your stomach for food, one third for drinks and one third for air to breathe."[26]

But they never felt content with such direction and so they directed others to exaggerate practicing the concept of having little. An example of this is what Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī narrated in his book 'Provision of the Hearts' that some ascetics used to allocate a juicy date to sustain himself and then he lives on it so that each day enjoy bits of its juice! This was a practice I followed after reading it, when I was young, but that caused my stomach to become tight and made me sick for years!

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[24] Bukhārī, #1088 and Muslim, #1339 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)

[25] Abū Dāwūd, 2/693-694/4904 on the authority of Anas (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)

[26] Tirmidhī, #2380, Ibn Mājah, #3349, Ḥākim, 4/121 and others.

After all this, do you really find this kind of practices are encouraged by religion or even indicates a kind of wisdom behind it? The ride of a human is his strength so if one attempts to weaken his rise he will be too weak to worship.

Let no one say that as attaining lawful money in its absolute form is impossible therefore asceticism has become obligatory to avoid doubtful matters! This argument is fallacious because it suffices the believer to ensure that the means whereby he receives his own money are lawful and not to bother about the primary origins of the money from which his own money was generated because if we conquered the lands of the Romans, the money raised from the sale of alcohol and vile acts turns lawful for us as it becomes spoils of war. That being the case, how come you want absolute lawfulness so you demand money reaches you while assuring that this money since it was made until it reached you was not used in any unlawful acts ever before? This is indeed something that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) did not investigate. Further, have not you heard that it is unlawful for him (ﷺ) to receive charity but when Burayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) received meat as a charity and then she gave it to him as a gift he did not mind eating it because the status of that meat had changed.[27]

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal said, 'I dislike eating little because some people did it and they became too weak to fulfil their duties.'

The statement made by Imām Aḥmad in this regard is absolutely correct because when a person limits his share of food and drink he continues to reduce his share until he is powerless to do voluntary acts of worship then [gradually] becomes unable to perform his duties until he reaches a state at which not only is he no longer able to fulfil his sexual duty towards his wife and hence does not guard her chastity, but also prevents him from seeking the means to earn money to support his family, not to mention stops him from doing the good deeds as he used to do. That said, let not the narrations you hear encourage people to starve you because such narrations are either intended to encourage fasting or to resist being sated. As for minimising the portion of food constantly, it negatively affects the strength of the body and is hence disallowed.

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[27] Bukhārī, #2578 and Muslim, #1075 on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhā*).

Amongst those whom we criticize from story tellers and ascetics are people who believe consuming meat should be avoided though the Prophet (ﷺ) used to like eating it [if it was available].

So, listen to me without being unbiased: Do not quote me stories of men as if they are proofs so that you come saying Bishr al-Ḥāfī said such and such, and Ibrāhīm Ibn Adam said such and such, because Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) are stronger evidence to use. Nevertheless, we assume and interpret the acts of those pious people whom you quoted [such as Bishr and Ibrāhīm] in a good way. I recall asking some of my Shaikhs about the reason for which some known pious people buried their books, I was answered, the best answer is to remain silent i.e. to mean that their act was due to their lack of knowledge, however I could interpret their action [in a better way] as I assumed that they might have included some of their personal opinions that they disliked people to follow so they decided to bury these books.

I have reported that Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Ḥawārī threw out his books in the river and said, 'Best of proofs you included! However, I'm no longer in need for a proof after I came to realise the purpose.'

This action, should we assume the good in it, can be interpreted that these books included statements he denied. However, should these books have included sound knowledge then obviously his action was a devastating waste.

My good assumption in them and giving them the benefit of doubt is correct regarding the learned ones amongst them. For instance, I have reported that Sufyān al-Thawrī gave his directions to bury his books because he regretted writing some narrations from some people in his books and apologized saying, 'I was enticed by my desire to narrate ḥadīth.'

This is because he used to record narrations taken from weak and abandoned narrators but after some time, it became difficult for him to recognize the discredited ones from whom he narrated, so he gave his directions to bury all the books [so no weak narrations could be reported through him]. The same applies to scholars who adopted some views then changed to other views; in such cases it is permitted for them to bury the books in which they included their old views that they no longer adopt; and this is the interpretation we offer for the actions of scholars who were reported to do such thing.

As for ascetics who heard and saw what these scholars did and copied their acts and buried books that included only good for the fear that such books may distract them from worshipping, then this is due to their ignorance because they extinguished a light that illuminated their way and at the same time wasted the possession that was unlawful to waste.

From amongst those who buried books of knowledge was Yūsuf Ibn Asbāṭ, who afterwards became too impatient to narrate the ḥadīths and so he made mistakes causing him to be considered amongst the weak narrators.

Shuʿayb Ibn Ḥarb related: 'I asked Yūsuf Ibn Asbāṭ: 'What did you do with your books?' He said, 'I was on an island, so when the tide was low, I buried my books so that when the tide rose again, the water covered my books.' So I asked him, 'What made you do that?' He said, 'I did not wish the books to distract me."

Imām Bukhārī said, 'Ṣadaqah said that Yūsuf Ibn Asbāṭ buried his books then afterwards he used to confuse narrations and hence does not follow the set criteria [in terms of narrating].'

As it appears, these books which he buried were beneficial books but his lack of knowledge led him to the loss of such books; he intended good throught evil. If his books were similar to the books of Sufyān al-Thawrī; which included narrations he reported from weak people whom he could not afterward identify, it would have been justifiable. However, his justification was that he did not wish to keep what may distract him from worship, is a proof that his books were all beneficial. This is what the lack of knowledge does to good people.

I have been informed that one of the pious, whom we highly respect, glorify and visit, was once on the shore of the River of Dijlah. He invalidated his *wuḍū* as he urinated then he made *tayammum* [i.e. used earth to perform *wuḍū* which is prescribed only when water is not found]. He was asked, 'Why have you made tayammum when water is nearby?' He said, 'I feared not to live long enough to reach it!' Though this incident indicates his short hope [i.e. not having expectations to live long], jurists used to ridicule him because tayammum is correct and prescribed only when water is not found. Thus, when water is available hitting the earth to have its dust to use for *tayammum* becomes in vain. As a matter of fact, even if water is miles away then it may not suffice to opt for *tayammum*.

He who contemplates these incidents realises that one jurist with few followers in his life and a few people following his funeral is better than thousands of people whom laypeople surround seeking Allāh's blessings through them and whose funerals are followed by a large number of people.

This is because we should only follow either a person who acts upon an [authentic] report or a jurist who understands the purpose of religion and issue his verdicts based on it. Truly, I seek refuge with Allāh from ignorance and magnifying and glorifying ancestors and following their steps blindly without having any proof to support it! This is because when someone drinks from the first drink [i.e. whoever follows what the first generation were upon] will find that every other drink is debased.

The greatest trial is the praise of laypeople by which many people were tempted and hence deviated! As 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*) said, 'The sound of shoes steps [i.e. followers] made the fools lose their sanity.' I have witnessed and heard laypeople praising a person saying, 'So and so neither sleeps at night nor eats in the day nor marries nor is interested in worldly pleasures and so his body becomes weak to the point he prays sitting down as he cannot pray standing, therefore he is indeed better than the scholars who eat and enjoy worldly pleasures.'

They say such statements due to their [low] level of knowledge. Otherwise, if they knew, they would have realised and understood that if the entirety of worldly pleasures were assembled into one bite of food that a scholar, who teaches people Allāh's religion and advises them of religious verdicts, eats, then one religious verdict he would say, whereby directing people to Allāh, the Most High, is better and more superior than the lifetime of a worshipper (the one mentioned above).

Ibn 'Abbās (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhumā*) said, '*Shaytān* suffers more from a single jurist than it suffers from 'a thousand worshippers.'

My praise of scholars should not be understood to refer to the learned ones who do not act upon their knowledge. On the contrary, I only praise the learned ones who act upon their knowledge and hence are aware of what life conditions suit them. For instance, some of them could handle a hard life such as Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal while, on the other hand, some of them are used to enjoying a comfortable life such as Sufyān whose piety and righteousness were remarkable.

Mālik Ibn Anas whose religiousness is notable, and al-Shāfi'ī whose knowledge and understanding are profound. Having said that, no person should ever seek or demand a life condition that some other people could manage but beyond his capacity.

This is because a person best knows what is good for him; Rābi'ah said, 'If you know that the state of your heart will be rectified by eating falaoudhaj then eat it.'

O you who listen to this! Do not let your eyes see nothing but images of asceticism because sometimes a person may indulge into the comfort of life only to achieve a benefit [related to his Hereafter]. Not all bodies can survive rough living, particularly those whose strength was worn out, whose mind was exhausted, and whose poverty weakened them because if such a person does not treat himself gently then, by doing so, he actually abandons a duty, since he is required to look after himself.

The above are some thoughts that if I explained in detail and supported it with stories and narrations, I would have written too much. But, I recorded them down in a hurry as soon as the thoughts roamed in my mind! And Allāh is the Provider of benefit by His Mercy.

CHAPTER TWENTY

What Comes After Death

Though there is an agreement amongst all people that the soul exists, the dispute over its nature and essence still arises. The lack of knowledge about the latter, however, does not harm the belief of a person since its existence is acknowledged. The destiny of souls after death is another issue that people have been confused about and also disputed over. The correct truthful view is that it exists after death; either punished or relished.

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal said: 'The souls of believers are in heaven whereas the souls of disbelievers are in Hell.'

Some of the narrations addressing martyrs also state, "Their souls are placed in the crops of green birds hanging from the trees of heaven."[28]

However, some ignorant people misinterpreted and took the face value of the narrations addressing the comfort the deceased receives after death and so they said, 'The dead eat and marry while they are in their graves.' However, the truth is that for souls after death is either punishment or at ease, which is a state the soul will feel until the Day of Judgment. Then, on the Day of Judgment, the soul will be returned into its body so it can fully enjoy the reward [or feel the punishment] by the means of the body.

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[28] Muslim, #1887 on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)

The statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): "in crops of green birds" is a proof that souls cannot attain pleasure except via a means (i.e. body), be it the pleasures of food or drinks etc. As for the pleasure received because of knowledge, it can be attained even in the absence of means [i.e. body].

The reason intended by the previous comments is because I have noticed how the notion of death disturbs me a bit, as well as how the '*self*' expects to vanish at that point. Therefore, I said to my '*self*', 'O you! If you truthfully believe in Islām, then you are informed of what you know [i.e. what happens to souls after death] thus you should not object. If you, however, doubt what the religion informed you, then you are actually questioning and doubting the religion, per se.' My '*self*' replied, 'I have no doubt whatsoever.' So, I said, 'In this case, you should strive more to rectify your belief and strive to be fearful of Allāh, as only then shall you be relieved from what will happen at the time of death—as I only worry that you may be slack in your duties. You should also know that the levels of grace [in heaven] are according to the levels of virtues; hence fly high with the wings of hard work to reach its highest towers and beware of being hunted by a fanciful-desire or trapped by inadvertency and deception.'

And with Allāh is all success.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Submission versus Obligations

One day, in one of my assemblies I said to the people that attend, 'If mountains were to carry the burdens that were placed on me, they would have failed.' However, after I returned home my 'self' questioned me for saying such an anxious statement, so it said to me, 'How could you make such a statement that may leave people under the impression that you are in a calamity when, in fact, you and your family are all well? Besides, the tasks that you are obliged to do, by religion, is similar to what everyone else is obliged to do—so what is the grounds of such complaint?' I responded, 'My statement was neither a complaint nor whining! But rather, a way to ease and relieve myself from the stress and concern I have over [fearing not being able to fulfil] such obligations. Also, there were many companions and *tabi'in* who said before me, 'We wish we had never been created,' which was said only due to the heavy weight of obligations that they strived to fulfil. Needless to add, he who thinks [religious] obligations are easy is indeed unaware of the nature (and implication) of such obligations.

Whoever confines [religious] obligations to washing the bodies with a litre of water or standing in the niche to perform two *rak'ah*, is indeed far from knowing the truth of such obligations for the said two examples are nothing but the easiest type of obligations!

The serious and difficult type of religious obligation is the kind that even mountains acknowledged to be beyond their capacity and power to bear. To give an example of this, when I see Divine Decrees (*al-Qadr*) what my intellect cannot comprehend, I compel my mind to submit to the One who decreed it and hence accept it. This is why such types of obligations are the most difficult ones, especially where the mind cannot conclude the wisdom behind some events; such as the suffering of children and the slaughtering of animals etc, which, despite their nature, we should believe that He Who predestined and decreed these events to take place is the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate. This is indeed a matter that confuses people, thus the type of obligation required in such cases is to submit and never object. This reflects the huge difference between the obligations set for the intellect and the obligations set for the body!

If I intend to elaborate on this topic I will take a long time, but nevertheless I apologise for what I have just said, and therefore will only speak about what is relevant to myself and disregard the condition of others.

Since my childhood I have been fond of learning religious knowledge so I busied my time in learning; hence I commenced my studies in all the different sciences and branches. This passion I had, to seek knowledge, made me not only to seek knowledge of all the Islāmic sciences, but to also seek minor details and hidden meanings related to each science. But, I know that time is not enough and life is short, and while the passion manifests, weakness appears, therefore leaving some of what I intended unfulfilled is something I grieve!

This religious knowledge that I acquired directed me to know the

Worshipped (i.e. Allāh) and encouraged me to be at His servitude. Then all the evidences guided me to Him so I stood before Him and perceived Him as per His Own description. I recognised Him through His Attributes while my heart sighted some of His Mercy and Grace. Thereafter I became drowned in His love. This made me devote myself to His service and become so passionate as soon as I remember Him. Therefore my solitude at which I serve Him has become sweeter than all types of sweetness.

Every time I become more apt to solitude to worship Him, knowledge would call me and demand me to come back to it, while blaming me saying, 'How you ignore me now though I was the reason by which you know Him?' I respond by saying, 'You were just my guide [in this journey] but after my arrival to the final destination, there will be no need for a guide.'

However knowledge argued back saying, 'Far from the truth it is! The more knowledge you have the further you will know the One you love and also understand how to draw near to Him. The proof on what I say is that you know being alive tomorrow means that you are less [in time] today. Have you not heard the verse in which Allāh directs His Prophet (ﷺ):

وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

"And say, 'O Lord increase me in knowledge.'"
[*Taha* (20): 114]?

Do you not wish to draw nearer to Him? If so, let it be through directing His slaves to Him because that is the way the Prophets were upon. They devoted themselves to teach people and preferred that over isolating themselves from everyone just to worship Him. This was not to happen if they did not know that directing people to their

Lord is more beloved to the One whom they love [i.e. Allāh]. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), "By Allāh, even if a single man is led on the right path (of Islām) through you, then that will be better for you than the red camels."[29]

Upon realising the truthfulness of what knowledge said, I occupied myself with teaching people, which made me distracted [from devoting myself for His worship]. And whenever I am assured of fulfilling my purpose of benefiting people, in this regard, I became weaker. This made me indecisive as to which leg [i.e. solitude or teaching] to rely on while standing! While being in such confusion, knowledge pronounced, "You should get up and work to earn what can sustain your family, and endeavour to have a child who remembers Allāh." However, whenever I embark upon this path, I realise the breast of this life no longer produces milk [i.e. It is difficult to find a source of income] because I had spent all my time in seeking knowledge, leaving me with no time to learn a profession from which I could earn an income. On the other hand, when I observe how the children of this worldly life live [i.e. people who wholly indulge in worldly affairs], I notice that those who buy their goods often compromise their religion in exchange of receiving a worldly benefit and so they chase it, or worse, become pretentious in the hope of achieving some worldly benefits. As a matter of fact, what often happens is that they compromise their religion yet still receive nothing from what they had hoped for!

Despite the complexity of all that, when boredom tells me to avoid getting involved in worldly affairs [i.e. seeking solitude to devote myself to worshipping Allāh], knowledge warns me by quoting me the ḥadīth of the Prophet (ﷺ), "It is enough of a sin for a person to neglect those whose provision is his responsibility!"[30]

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[29] Bukhārī, #3701 and Muslim, #2406 on the authority of Sahl Ibn Sa'd (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

And, when determination encourages me to seclude myself, knowledge reminds me of the ones whom I should look after and am responsible for.

My condition is that I intend to reduce my share of this world [by taking the minimum of what is made lawful and available for me] though I basked in its pleasures in my upbringing and was lavished with a comfy and graceful lifestyle. Thus making my nature and taste robust and unusual. For that reason, if I start to change the garment material I wear and consume less nutritious food, my nature becomes disturbed as it is not used to such rough lifestyle. Therefore, sickness accompanies me and that prevents me from fulfilling my duties and makes me fall into trouble. It is known though that enduring a hard life a person is not used to after enjoying a soft life, may ruin the self.

So, I kept saying to myself, 'What should I do to overcome this situation? I seclude myself even when I am in solitude and I weep more for my shortcomings.' And so I say again to myself, 'I describe the condition of scholars and the learned while my body is too weak to teach knowledge now. I describe the condition of the ascetics while my body is too weak to endure such a life condition! Being in the company of people and around those who love me keep distracting me from devoting myself to the Hereafter and implant in my heart the pictures of all that my desirous self wants causing the mirror of my heart to rust! The tree of love [i.e. to love Allāh] requires good soil, and must be irrigated from the water of solitude that runs in the cognition of thoughts. Yet still, if I decide to take the path of work to earn the money, I could not stand it too! If I decide to integrate with the children of this worldly life [i.e. people whose interest is in achieving worldly benefits] and seek their help, I will not be able to do so as my innate nature stops me from humiliating myself. My religiousness stops me from taking this option! Thus, I am apt not to choose either and so it is has no effect on me. And mixing with people is harmful with every breath a person takes, thus neither realising my repentance is within my capacity, nor is achieving a rank because of knowledge, or a good deed or [Allāh's] love are suitable for me.'

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[30] Muslim, #996, Abū Dāwūd, #1692 and others on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

The following lines of poetry explain my situation perfectly:

He threw him in the river while being chained, then he said to him
Beware and beware of becoming wet

All this made me confused about myself and so I cried for how my life is spent. During my solitude, I recited some poetry that I heard common people say as I feel it describes my situation:

Woe to me as I still cover my tripping,
For I am like a prisoner in no cell
I have no solution as I am helpless;
As soon as my wings grew, you let me go.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Rectifying the Heart Requires Leaving Desires

I pondered upon the condition of this world and the condition of the Hereafter. I came to know that events of this life are tangible and congenital as opposed to the events of the Hereafter, which are faith (*īmān*) based and certainty (*yaqīn*). Therefore whoever has knowledge and sense of certainty not profound, will be more inclined towards tangible and congenital events.

As the level of effectual events depends on their causes, mixing with people, sighting the desired, and the exposure to attractions should strengthen the effect of tangible and congenital events [i.e. the effectual factors of this world become stronger and hence attract people more than the Hereafter does].

On the other hand, solitude (*'uzla*), contemplation (*fikr*) and seeking knowledge (*'ilm*) are means by which the effect of the events of the Hereafter becomes stronger and hence more effectual.

Experiencing the market places where worldly pleasures and adornments are offered, and then visiting cemeteries to think and soften the heart, should give someone two obvious different feelings.

The reason for such differences is because at each situation the kind of exposure to events differs. That being the case, you should seek solitude, observe a constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allāh and seek knowledge (*'ilm*) for it is the advice I offer you. This is because solitude (*'uzla*) is a diet and contemplation (*fikr*) and knowledge (*'ilm*) are medicine; hence treating yourself with medicine means you should not mix it with what harms you. And you know that mixing with people has debased your heart and actions so the only cure is what I have prescribed for you.

However, if you insist on mixing with people and exposing yourself to desires while wishing to rectify your heart, then you have indeed sought the impossible.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Forbidden Fruit is Sweet

I thought about how the *'self'* eagerly seeks whatever has been kept away from it, and noticed that the more a matter is forbidden, the further the *'self'* pursues it. An example of this is noted in the origin of humanity i.e. after Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) was forbidden to eat from the tree; he became keen to eat from the forbidden tree even though there were plenty of trees that would have sufficed him. As the Arabic saying goes: 'What is forbidden is sought after and what is not [forbidden] yet attained is [least] desired.'

It was also said, 'If people were commanded to be hungry they would have endured hunger and if they were commanded not to break apart faeces they would have wanted to do it, justify the saying, 'certainly there was something in it for which we were forbidden from.'

This made me investigate the reasons behind this behaviour and I concluded that this is due to two reasons;

- Firstly: The human *'self'* cannot handle being restricted or being contained, thus limited within the body is the maximum level of its forbearance. If the 'self' is prevented from something, it becomes more eager and reckless just to attain the forbidden. This is why it is easy for a person to remain at home for one full month, yet if he was told not to leave his house for an entire day, he would find that unbearable.

- Secondly: The human *'self'* [is rebellious] and hence finds it difficult to be under any authority. This is why it tends to enjoy the unlawful and almost finds no joy in the lawful. And this is why it's easy for a person to worship as per what it senses and sees and favouring it over anything else.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Solitude is Meant to Avoid Evil Not Goodness

I still struggle with my *'self'* as to whether I should continue preaching at assemblies where I see sinners repenting as well as ascetics, or should I seclude myself from people and dedicate all my time to worshipping Allāh and live an asceticism lifestyle.

This kind of [inner] struggle I have found to be from the *Shaytān*'s deception because the *Shaytān* notices that my sermons are attended by numerous people who weep for their previous sins, many of them do not leave the assembly until they repent and detach themselves from the idle life they have lived.

I have had approximately fifty to one-hundred people repenting during my assemblies and sometimes even more. Most of them are youth who were indulging in idle play and sins.

This must have intimidated the *Shaytān* as he noticed how I attracted those whom he tricked into his evil traps. Thus wanted to distract me from what I was doing and keep me away from people so he can again trick those whom I pulled away from his path. [His frustration] made him attempt suggesting to me that being in such assemblies made me flaunt before people.

I replied, ‘If you mean bettering the structure of my words and making them eloquent so that the meaning is expressed via the best words, it is actually a virtue and not a shortcoming. However if you mean that I intend with my speeches what Allāh forbade, then that is impossible and I seek Allāh’s refuge from such an act.’

[As he failed in his attempts in this regard] he started suggesting asceticism as it will stop me from being involved in anything unlawful. However, I said, ‘If I liked the state of asceticism and succeeded in secluding myself from everyone, then what if afterwards my wealth became depleted or some of my family members were in need—would this not ruin me? Thus, let me work so I can collect what suffices me and protects me from begging people; so that if I live long then what I earned will be something I benefit from, otherwise my family will.’

I do not wish to be like a traveller in the desert who spills his water upon seeing the mirage of water and so, as he realised what he saw was just a delusion, his regret could not help him.

The correct thing to do is to prepare your bed before sleeping and collect money to avoid seeking help from others in the future when you become old. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Leaving your heirs with sufficient funds is better than leaving them in need of other’s charity.”[31] He (ﷺ) also said, “The best money is [when] it is possessed by a good man.”[32]

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[31] Bukhārī, #5354 and Muslim, #1628 and others on the authority of Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*)

[32] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 4/197, *Adab al-Mufrad* of Imām Bukhārī, #299 on the authority of ‘Amr Ibn Āṣ (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*). See *Sahih Adab al-Mufrad* (1/112), it is ṣaḥīḥ.

As for solitude (*'uzla*), it should be practiced to avert and abstain from evil, but not from the good because abstaining from evil is obligatory at all times. Whereas teaching the seekers of knowledge and directing the seekers of guidance are as a matter of fact, the [better] acts of worship of the learned.

This is why some scholars often prefer to author a book or teach beneficial knowledge to others over offering voluntary prayers and fasting, because the former is a seed whose harvest is plenty and its goodness extends for a longer time.

There are two reasons why the *'self'* naturally inclines towards the temptations of *Shaytān*:

- Firstly: The innate nature of humans is naturally disposed towards being indolent because secluding oneself from others is much easier than performing deeds [like teaching knowledge], which requires exertion.
- Secondly: The love of being praised, because when a person is known for his asceticism, common people become more inclined towards him.

It is therefore pertinent to look into the ways of the first generation; the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions, and follow their steps.

Were there any reports from them mentioning any of them ever secluding themselves from people, or abstained from knowledge as some ignorant ascetics and Ṣūfi's do?

[Do they not know that] Prophets dedicated their time to be with people and encouraging them to do good and forbidding them from evil.

As for those who are incompetent in the field of religious knowledge and so decide to stay away from people to avoid evil, they are exempted from the admonished ones as they intend to guard themselves considering their condition and intention.

On the other hand, the learned whose knowledge qualifies him to distinguish and recognise what he deals with, people will benefit from him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Best of You is Who Acts Upon his Knowledge

I pondered upon what is expected from mankind, and realised it is that they admit their humility (*dhull*) [before Allāh] and acknowledge their weaknesses (*taqṣīr*) and inadequacy (*'ajz*) [and incapacity].

I have classified the learned [scholars] and the austere who act upon their knowledge into two categories; under the category of scholars (*'ulamā'*) I have listed Imām Mālik Ibn Anas, Imām Sufyān [al-Thawrī], Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām al-Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, and under the category of the practicing austere (*'ubād*) I listed Mālik Ibn Dinār, Rabī'ah, Ma'rūf al-Karkhī and Bishr Ibn al-Ḥārith.

Each time these worshippers (*'ubād*) increase their worship (*'ibādah*) they reproach themselves saying, 'The benefit of your worship does not reach out to anyone else except yourselves. It is the scholars whose benefit (*nafa'*) extends to everyone else, and they are the heirs of the Prophets (*warathul-Anbiyā'*) and the appointed people from Allāh on earth. They are virtuous (*faḍl*) and the reference point of people in all aspects of their lives.' To this understanding, they humble themselves and admit their shortcomings in this regard, and realise the reality of themselves.

Mālik Ibn Dinār used to come to Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and say, 'Al-Ḥasan is my teacher.'

And, every time scholars noticed their virtue due to their knowledge, they reproach themselves saying, 'What is the purpose of knowledge (*'ilm*) if one does not act upon it?'

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal said, 'The purpose of knowledge is so we can be similar to Ma'rūf [in respect to his worship].'

And Sufyān al-Thawrī said, 'I wish my hand was cut and that I did not write down ḥadīth.'[33]

Umm al-Dardā' (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*) asked a man: 'Have you acted upon what you have learnt?' He said 'No.' She replied: 'Why do you seek of what Allāh will use against you then?' Abū'l-Dardā' (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, 'Woe to the one who acts without knowledge once and woe to the one who knows but does not act upon it seventy times.'

Al-Fuḍayl said, 'The ignorant is forgiven seventy sins before the learned is forgiven one sin.'

Thus Allāh said,

هَلْ يَسْتَوِى ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

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[33] This is because he used to record narrations taken from weak and abandoned narrators but after some time, it became difficult for him to recognize the discredited ones from whom he narrated, so he gave his directions to bury all the books [so no weak narrations could be reported through him].

> "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"
> [*al-Zumar* (39):9]

Sufyān visited Rabī'ah and listened to her speeches and benefited from her

Knowledge, therefore, pinpointed for scholars that the purpose of learning knowledge is so they can act upon it, and it is just an instrument and a means. This made them admit their shortcomings and become humble.

Each of them [practicing scholars and ascetics] reached the point at which they admitted their humility [before Allāh] and acknowledged their shortcomings for not doing enough. Knowledge made them demonstrate the truthful meaning of slavery [to Allāh] (*'ubudiyyah*), which is the actual purpose of being commanded to perform what Allāh ordained.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Loving the Creator is one of the Highest Levels of True Servitude (*ʿubudiyyah*)

I have contemplated the verse,

يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُۥٓ

"He loves them [believers] and they love Him."
[*al-Māʾidah* (5):54]

and inferred that the human *'self'* (*nafs*) refuses to affirm its love (*maḥabbah*) for the Creator if such longing (*shawq*) necessitates emotional distress. The *'self'* justifies its position by arguing that its obedience (*ṭaʿat*) to Him is its love for Him. Contemplating this justification made me realise that the *'self'* did not yet acquire the [adequate] knowledge of loving Allāh because of its strong inclination towards what it perceives in the form of palpable events and objects.

To clarify, the kind of love that is based on tangibility is restricted to the apparent objects of what is loved, whereas the kind of love that is based on knowledge and worship goes beyond to perceive the inner intangible objects. For this reason, we find people love Abū Bakr (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*) and some other people love ʿAlī Ibn

Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*). And there are some very staunch followers of Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and some die hard followers of al-Ashʿarī; this type of following often instigates disputes and fights between the two groups, even sacrificing their lives for the sake of defending them out of their love to them. Though they have neither seen them nor would seeing their images instigate such love. Rather, they pictured the meanings of what those whom they love stand for, and that directed them to learn of the perfection of these religious icons in the field of knowledge.

As a result, they loved the images of these people, which they have perceived with their hearts. Now contemplate and think, if this is the case with creation, then what about the One who created these intangible images?

How could I not to love the One who imparted me with my senses and bestowed on me knowledge I enjoy!? The appreciation of knowledge and the means by which I grasp knowledge surpasses all other tangible enjoyments for, indeed, He is the One who taught me, created my awareness, and guided me to what I have grasped. He reflects His Existence through every new creation He makes, through which I can understand His perfection, through the perfection of what He creates. He created all of what and whom I love, be it tangible or intangible. I love what I love by His will and Power, for He facilitates for me the means by which I realise what I love. Indeed, for me, the best of all enjoyment is to come to know Him, for if He did not teach me, I would have not recognised Him.

How am I not supposed to love the One who created and [constantly] maintains my life? The One in whose Hand is my provision and Unto Him I shall return? The One who created and adorned everything people like and inclined people's hearts to all that.

Whilst all what He created is perfect, His Capacity and Power is even more perfect! And, despite the [systemic and] marvellous creation of His, His perfection surpasses and is more superior to the perfection of the created! The meaning of realising [of all that] is much more enjoyable than what is realised.

If we see an astonishing sculpture, we would have spent all the time commending the artist and complimenting his work and his talent instead of paying attention to the work per se. This is actually where the pure thoughts land when it looks beyond the tangibility of objects; they fall in love with the Creator of the work by necessity.

That being the case, as much as a person can notice the Creator through what He creates, is as much as he will love Him. When such perception is strong, it will originate feelings of longing (*shawq*) and concern (*qaliq*). If such perception directs a person to realise the supremacy of the Lord, it will generate feelings of fear (of Him), and if it directs a person to realise the Generosity of the Lord, it will generate strong hope. Indeed,

كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ

"and every people knew its watering place."
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 60]

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Intellect Must Submit to the Wisdom of Allāh

There is a worthy contemplative and awe-inspiring situation in that Allāh, Most High, Created and constructed our bodies perfectly as per His wisdom (*ḥikmah*), by which He indicated His Perfection and Wisdom.

However, He then designated death by which these bodies become ruined so that the intellect of mankind becomes confused after having already submitted to His wisdom.

Yet He informs us that bodies will be resurrected and such bodies are only created to pass through the channel of knowledge [i.e. to know His existence] and trade in the seasons of deeds [i.e. live in this life to perform good deeds]; upon which the intellect of mankind has settled and rested.

Then I noticed events even more inspiring and fulgurous, such as how the body of a young person who has not completely developed becomes incapacitated, and how the soul of a child is taken away while he is in his parents hands that makes them distressed—as they do not know for what wisdom he was taken away, while knowing that Allāh does not need to take him away from them, and that they are the most in need of people to have their child with them.

A situation that is more inexplicable is the marinating of the life of a senile old-aged person who is unaware of his existence and life makes him undergo nothing but distress. Similar to such situations is when a wise believer is poor while a foolish disbeliever is affluent. There are more examples that the mind cannot comprehend the wisdom behind them and so the mind remains astonished and surprised.

It is for this reason, I have continued pondering upon what Allāh ordained upon us until I came to realise that as the intellect of mankind exerts all its efforts but still fails to understand the wisdom of all that Allāh has ordained upon us. While at the same time, confirm by evidence that the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) is the Most Knowledgeable (*al-ʿAlīm*) and Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*), it (the intellect) realises its shortcomings and incapacity to understand the purpose of all actions. So it submits while acknowledging its incapacity and hence fulfils all the obligations necessary.

Therefore if the intellect was asked, 'Since you know the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) of the Creator exists through the evidence of His creation, is it possible to question His Wisdom because He removes what He creates?' It would have replied, 'Not at all. This is because I know by evidence that He is the Most Knowledgeable (*al-ʿAlīm*) and Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) and that I am incapable of realising the reasons behind [all] His Actions, therefore I submit to His Wisdom as I have no recourse but to do so as I admit my weaknesses.'

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

The Wisdom and Etiquette of Marriage

Upon contemplating the benefits, meanings and nature of marriage (nikah), I found out that the main reason for its existence is to bring forth offspring because naturally the living constantly undergoes a process of decomposition from which a part transforms into nutrition while the rest comes to an end. Thus, should this worldly life be intended to last for a certain time and such bodies are created mortal, then the feature of offspring was originated to replace the source [i.e. ensure continuity of human life].

However, since the process of sexual intercourse and intimacy requires and entails uncovering body parts and exposure to what a human despises per se. Which are acts that honourable innate natures disdain, Allāh implanted lust in people to encourage them to accept and embrace such acts, hence achieve the purpose of marriage.

Aside from the main purpose, I also noticed another purpose that is found in performing sexual intercourses [within marriage]—that is the discharging of the sperm [from the male organ] which otherwise becomes harmful should it be congested within the body for a long time.

This is because sperm is dispatched from the fourth stage of digestion, thus its essence is the most nutritious and best of quality. Then it gathers and accumulates, for the body saves blood and semen as well as saliva, being one of the main pillars of the body, to maintain its strength and survival as if it fears its vanishing. Whenever sperm accumulates above normal levels it will disturb the body in a similar way to what urine congestion does to the body. In the case of semen, its intangible negative effect is more disturbing than that of the tangible effect of urine congestion. Since semen congestion leads to severe diseases affecting the function of the brain, and can also be toxic.

When a person enjoys healthy (*salīm*) functional organs, the body will naturally urge the need for semen to be released whenever it accumulates exactly as how one has the urge to urinate whenever urine accumulates in the body. However, since the healthiness (*ṣaḥīḥ*) of people's sex organs and desires differ from one person to another [i.e. some people may have less concentration of semen and so the urge for releasing it will be lesser]. It should be noted that I am addressing those who have healthy sex organs when discussing this subject matter. That being said, as I have previously explained; when semen accumulates in the body, its congestion will cause diseases (*amrāḍ*) and bring forth filthy ideas (*afkār*) into the mind, as well as entice heated passion (*'ishq*) and insinuating whispers (*waswasa*).

On the other hand, we may also find a person whose sex organs and desire are in a healthy state, yet still urges for more though he relieved himself from semen, and so he becomes like a person who eats yet never becomes replete.

I have investigated the reasons for this condition and came to the conclusion that the problem, in such a case, lies with whom sexual intercourse is conducted with [i.e. unattractiveness, ugliness, physical defect, or even being undesired], which causes only some of the semen to be released and not all of it.

If you want to verify this statistics, try to compare the quantity of semen you would release when it is in the place you desire and the quantity when you release it in a less desired place. For example, compare and see the difference between actual copulation and the process without penetration, and the difference between having sexual intercourse with a virgin and having sexual intercourse with a non-virgin woman.

This explains that selecting the right partner will ensure the release of all accumulated semen and hence ultimate pleasure will be enjoyed accordingly. This issue may affect the quality of a person's offspring too; the child resulting from two young persons who saved themselves for marriage is stronger than others, and most often, especially those who experience sexual intercourse frequently. For this reason, it was disliked for relatives to marry each other because marrying a relative is less attractive to the self as it gives the person the feeling he is interacting with a part of himself. Thus, marrying non-blood related women is encouraged and praised.

From this art (of relationships), a person can ensure averting the harm of his surplus semen by marrying another one, even if the new one is unpleasant to the eye, as that may give results that are not achieved normally. The example of this is like a person who is eating bread and meat until no space is left in his stomach for another bite. If desert however was served, he will eat from it and if new items are presented he will still eat from them too.

This is because the idea of *'desiring the new'* is eye-inspiring where the *'self'* is not attracted to what it is used to, but rather seeks what it has not experienced assuming a new joy will be gained from it. And, if the *'self'* does not receive the pleasure it is after from the new object, it will search for it in another object assuming that such pure pleasure exists elsewhere—and that is something it imagines in every newly sought object.

In the paradigm of this understanding there is hidden evidence on the existence of resurrection because to create humans with endeavours and desires to attain the ultimate pleasure, though such pleasure does not exist in this life will be futile and in vain, thus heed this meaning!

So long the *'self'* finds defects and flaws of what it experiences in this worldly life, it will keep searching for the [ideally perfect] new. On this account, wise men have said aforetime, 'Extreme love is to be too blind to see the shortcomings and defects of the one you love, and whoever busies himself with his own flaws will find no time to find flaws in others.'

For this reason it is liked for the wife to neither keep her husband away from her to the point he forgets her, nor to draw him close to her to the point that he becomes bored with her.

The same applies to the husband too so that he does not become tired with her or know the details of her defects. Moreover, the wife should endeavour that her husband does not see her genitals (except occasionally), ensure to smell good for him [when he is around her] and to ensure to do all similar acts that wise women do [to impress, attract and keep their men attentive]. Women are naturally aware of such methods and practices and do not need to receive any advice or education about it.

As for the ignorant women who do not pay attention to these details, their husbands, in not much time, will start seeking other women and turn away from them.

If a person desires to have an intelligent and healthy child, and at the same time enjoy himself, he should carefully select the female he allows himself to have intimate relation with. If he is after a wife, he should look at her and if he feels there is chemistry between them, then he can proceed with marriage.

Not only that, but he then should find out the effect she will have on him because the sign of [ultimate] love is that he is not able to take his eyes away from her and that whenever she is away from his sight; his heart becomes troubled and distressed until he sees her again; that is the pinnacle level of love. There are many levels below this too; each level brings forth different results and effects.

If he is after buying a female concubine, then he should look more than he would look normally! And, if one is able to speak with the woman he intends to marry or encourage her to talk so that he has an idea about how she converses, he should do so and then to look at her [face] for the beauty of women lies in their eyes and mouths.

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal stated that it is permissible for a man proposing to a woman to see of her more than her face.

Having said that, it is better if a person can wait for some time before finalising the marriage or buying the female-slave in order to test the longing of his heart for her because as every intelligent person knows, the '*self*' longs and yearns for a matter either because it is untried or because of love. If it was the latter, he should proceed so long he is sure that his yearning for her is because of his love.

'Aṭā' al-Kharasanī said, 'It is written in the Torah that marriage without love is a regret and misery until the Day of Judgment.'

The second step is to investigate the character (*akhlāq*) of the chosen individual because manners are from the hidden (*khaffī*) aspect of the person—if she possess good character it only increase her in beauty. Since having well raised children is also a purpose of marriage, then the good character of one who will bear the child is essential.

Having one's desires fulfilled [lawfully] in order to free the heart and mind from such distractions is a cardinal pillar as it will devote the heart towards minding one's other important matters. When a person finishes from subsequent side tasks he will then be able to focus on his original major tasks.

This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A judge should never rule between two persons when he is angry"[34] and he (ﷺ) also said, "When dinner is served at the time of *'Ishā* prayer, eat your dinner first."[35]

That being said, when a person finds a woman whose image is as good as her character (i.e. a well-mannered woman with a pleasant look), he should overlook her flaws and shortcomings, and she should try her best to please him without being too distant so he does not forget her, or being too close so he does not get bored with her.

Furthermore, she should beautify herself in the manner he likes so she maintains and fulfils the sexual needs of both of them, leading to her pregnancy and providing a child.

Following the precautions I have outlined previously, such relationships last and suffice each partner without the need for them to look for other options. However, if the man can afford having another woman [in a lawful manner], and knows that will help him to relieve his heart from all distractions and make him focused on fulfilling his other duties, it would better for him in such a case.

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[34] Bukhārī, #7158, Muslim, #1717 and others on the authority of Abū Bakrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)

[35] Bukhārī, #673, Muslim, #559 and others on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhumā*)

Yet, should he fear jealousy (*ghayra*) between the two women adding more distraction to his heart, which we are so concerned to maintain its focus, or should he fear the new woman will distract him from remembering his Hereafter or require him to compromise his piety (*wara'*), then he should suffice with one wife.

From the things I also advise to take into account is that a person should understand that chastity (*'afāf*) is unlikely to be one of the qualities of women with pleasant looks; therefore if a person is in love with a woman of this kind he should maintain her and guard her chastity excessively.

If he, however, finds in her [character] what he dislikes, he should not wait to replace her so that he does not remain attached to her and quickly overcome his feelings for her, so he does not slide in to state of distraction. And, if he could suffice with one woman then that would be better should one be sufficient, then he will be content and if she was not, then he divorces her and looks for another one instead.

When a person marries a woman he loves, this will make him ultimately release all his accumulated semen, which assures the brightness and healthiness of the child, as well as fulfilling the sexual needs perfectly. As for those who fear for the jealousy of wives, should opt for female servants for they have less jealousy over him and pleasing them is easier and more effectual than pleasing the wives.

There were many people before who managed to have more than one woman, and women were patient (*sābira*) and handled the situations well. For example, Prophet Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) had one-hundred women, and Prophet Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) had one-thousand women, and our Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions had many women, and the chief of believers; ʻAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu ʻanhu*) had four wives and seventeen slaves and his son, al-Ḥasan, married four-hundred women etc.

Having said all of that, if you could grasp a sound understanding of what I have just mentioned above, you will be a winner, by the permission of Allāh.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Sweetness of Good Deeds and the Warning of Bad Deeds

All that Allāh has created in this worldly life is just a model of what exists in the Hereafter. The process by which this worldly life operates, reflects the process operating in the Hereafter. The example of the former is what Ibn ʿAbbās (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhumā*) said, 'There is nothing in Paradise that is similar to what is on earth except the names.'

This is because Allāh, Exalted is He, made the grace of earth be a means of attraction to the grace of the Hereafter and He made the punishment of this worldly life be a means of admonishment of the punishment of the Hereafter.

The example of the latter is that every oppressor will be punished in this life before he is punished for it in the Hereafter. The same applies to every sin committed and this is reflected in the meaning stated in the verse,

مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوٓءًا يُجْزَ بِهِۦ

"Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it."
[*al-Nisā'* (4):123]

Some sinners whose wealth is safe (*salāma*) and whose health is sound believe that he is left unpunished, while in fact, his unawareness (*ghafla*) that he is being punished is enough of a punishment (*'aqūba*).

The wise have said before, 'Committing a sin (*ma'siya*) is the punishment (*'iqāb*) for committing a previous sin, and the good deed (*hasānat*) after doing a good deed is the reward (*thāwab*) of the first good deed.'

In fact, the punishment can sometimes be intangible as what some of the learned among the Children of Israel said, 'O Lord, we disobey you but You do not punish us?' It was said to them, 'The Lord has been punishing you but you do not realise it! Have you not noticed that the sweetness (*halāwa*) you used to have while invoking Him alone has been taken away from you?'

He who ponders upon this kind of punishment will find it happening in all cases. Wahb Ibn al-Ward was once asked, 'Could a person who commits sins taste the joy (*halāwa*) of obedience (*ta'a*)?' He replied: 'No, not even the one who intends to commit a sin.'

How many people there are who allowed their eyes to look at the unlawful and so Allāh deprived them from having the sense of insight (*basīra*), or allowed their tongue to backbite and abuse, so He forbade their heart (*qalb*) to be pure (*safā'*), or consumed a doubtful food and because of which He blackened their hearts and forbade them from praying at night (*qiyām al-layl*) and tasting the sweetness of His invocation, and so forth. This is something those who monitor their actions and bring themselves into account are fully aware of and understand.

In contrast, the pious and the obedient find the reward of their obedience in this life too before the Hereafter. Abū Umāmah (*radiyAllāhu* *'anhu*) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) narrated from His Lord that He, Exalted is He, said, "A look at a woman [who is unlawful to look at] is one of the *Shaytān*'s poisoned arrows. Whoever abandons it for the sake of my pleasure I shall reward him with a faith (*īmān*) which he will find the taste of its sweetness in his heart."[36]

All that has been mentioned so far is just a brief note to those who fail to notice this kind of punishment and reward. As for the obvious reward and punishment, it is very rare not to occur.

From this kind of reward and punishment is what the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned, "Sleeping during the time of duha time [i.e. starting from after sunrise to noon time] prevents one from receiving his provision"[37], and that "the slave [of Allāh] is prevented from receiving his provision because of a sin he commits."[38]

Scholars of the Qur'ān reported that each person from the children of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) had twelve children except Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) who had eleven because he was about to incline [to the seduction of the wife of his master though he did not act upon it as his inclination was a mere human nature].

This kind of reward and punishment, if contemplated by an insightful person will realise the place of reward and punishment in this aspect.

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[36] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 5/264, Ḥākim, 3/314 and Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, 10/173, on the authority of Hudayfah Ibn Yaman (*radiyAllāhu 'anhumā*). It is weak see *Da'īf al-Tarqīb wa'l-Tarhīb.*

[37] *Zawā'id Musnad* Aḥmad, 1/73, Haythamī in *al-Mujam*, 4/62. It is very weak.

[38] Ibn Mājah, #4022, Aḥmad, #531 and others on the authority of Thawbān (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*); see *Silsalah al-Da'īfah*, #3019.

Al-Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyāḍ said, 'When I disobey Allāh I [instantly] find its effect on the behaviour of my riding animal and my servant.'

Abū 'Uthmān al-Naysabūrī had his shoe cut while he was on his way to attend Friday prayer, so it took him some time until he fixed it so he said, 'It was cut because I did not perform the Friday *ghusl* (prescribed bath before Friday prayer).'

From the dazzling examples of punishment in this life is found in the story of the brothers of Yūsuf, that is when their hands threw him in the well,

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍۭ بَخْسٍ دَرَٰهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ

"And they sold him for a reduced price."
[*Yusuf* (12):20],

They were punished by having their same hands begging him and saying,

وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَآ

"and be charitable to us."
[*Yusuf* (12):88]

And when Yūsuf was patient and overcame the temptation of the woman, which his innate nature inclined to, he was rewarded by having her eventually in a lawful manner. And when she wronged him by arguing before her husband,

مَا جَزَآءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوٓءًا

"What is the recompense of one who intended evil for your wife?"
[*Yusuf* (12):25],

Allāh made her eventually utter the truth and admit,

أَنَاْ رَٰوَدتُّهُۥ

"It was I who sought to seduce him."

[*Yusuf* (12):51]

When a person gives up a sin for the sake of Allāh, Most High, or performs a good deed, then he will surely reap the fruit of his obedience. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "When you are poor or lack funds trade with Allāh by giving charity."[39] Meaning perform good deeds so that He increases the profit you will generate in this life.

I have witnessed people who allowed themselves to partake in the forbidden only to seek instant comfort, but instead their circumstances and life condition become distressful and were not able to achieve what they intended.

An old man narrated that he once bought a female-slave when he was young, 'After I bought her I desired her so much that I kept asking jurists hoping someone will permit me to be with her. But all of them said, you are neither allowed to look at her desirously nor touch her nor sleep with her until after she has her menses. So, I asked her about her menses and she told me that it was during her menses when I bought her, so I said, 'It is not a long time then until it's over.'

But when I asked the jurists they said, 'That menses is not counted as she must have one menstrual cycle while she is in your possession.' As I found myself extremely desirous (*shahwa*) to have her while I have the power to have her and she is next to me, I asked my '*self*', 'what do you think I should do [i.e. should I just do what I desire or wait until she becomes lawful for me]?' My '*self*' replied: 'Faith (*īmān*) is to be patient (*sabr*) over ember [i.e. endure the hardships] whether you want it or not.'

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[39] This appears to be a statement said by some of the righteous predecessors and its meaning is sound. However, as its authenticity is never established from the Prophet (ﷺ) no one is allowed to raises it to him. It is reported by Bayhaqi in *Shu'b al-Imān*.

So, I decided to be patient until all obstacles were removed and she was lawful for me to be with her.

And Allāh rewarded me for that patience by granting me what is better and higher in rank than her.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Nothing Escapes the Knowledge of Allāh

I looked into the proofs attesting the existence of Allāh, Most High, and found them to be more than the number of grains of sand. One of which is that a person conceals what he knows is disliked by Allāh, but Allāh, Exalted is He, eventually makes the effect of such disobedience to appear on him, and lets tongues utter it even if people have not witnessed it happening.

Moreover, He may facilitate for him a sin by which he becomes exposed among people and thus it becomes an answer to all the sins he previously hid so that he understands there is One who will punish sinners, and that no barrier or shelter will ever suffice before His Capacity and Power.

The same applies to a person performing a good deed in secret. Its effects appear on him and he becomes the talk of people, and even more than what he did, to the extent that people never recall he ever did a sin and only remember his good attributes. This is just to show mankind that there is a Lord who will not waste the effort of those who do good deeds.

The hearts of people recognise the condition of people and so they either love or hate, or praise or condemn him according to the relationship he has with Allāh, Most High, who will suffice him for every concern and avert harm away from him.

Thus, whenever a slave [of Allāh] rectifies his relationship with the people without paying attention to Allāh, his goals will turn out opposite to what he intended, and the one he expected to praise him will condemn him instead.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

People Differ in Rank Just Like Metals

After I pondered upon the earth and those living on its surface using the eyes of my contemplation, I came to realise that its destruction is larger than its construction.

Then I contemplated the constructive side of it and found it is taken by disbelievers, and that the proportion of Muslims to disbelievers is little.

Then I contemplated the situation of Muslims and found that generating profit and seeking means of earning have busied them. It distracted them from the One who Provides (*al-Razzāq*) them profit and provision. Also made them pay no attention to the knowledge (*ʿilm*) whereby He is recognised.

For example, the Sultān [ruler or person in authority] is occupied with directing instructions and enjoying the pleasures he comes across, and the water of his wishes is flowing without hindrance [i.e. all his requests are fulfilled without objection].

When people meet him, they do not offer him sincere advice or remind him of his Hereafter; rather they engulf him with a praise that feeds his ego and fanciful-desires! However, diseases should be treated with their opposite.

'Umar ibn al-Muhaajir said, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Aziz told me, 'If you find me deviating from the truth then pull my robe and shake me and say, what happened to you O 'Umar!'

And 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, 'May Allāh have Mercy upon the one who brings to my attention our mistakes.' This is because the most in need of advice and preaching is the ruler.

As for the soldiers of the Sultān, most of them are not only intoxicated by their fanciful-desires and worldly pleasures, but also are ignorant and lack knowledge.

Thus, neither a sin would make them bothered nor wearing silk or drinking alcohol would ever annoy them. On the contrary, some of them may [arrogantly] object and say, 'What should a soldier do then? Should he just wear cotton?' Apart from that, they take away things wrongfully and so injustice and oppression (*ẓulm*) accompany them just like how habits accompany humans.

As for nomads, they are overwhelmed with ignorance (*jahl*), and the same is the case with the villagers who are often exposed to impurity and are slack when it comes to missing praying an obligatory prayer (*ṣalah*), and even worse some of their women may pray while sitting down [while she is able to stand].

As for trade owners, I noticed that most of them are full of concern (*ḥirs*) for wealth to the extent they do not care about the means of earning; be it lawful (*ḥalāl*) or unlawful (*ḥarām*). Furthermore, usury (*ribā*) has become common in their financial transactions and so none of them really care from where his money is generated. Needless to say, they, except those whom Allāh guarded from such sins, neither pay the obligatory alms (*zakāt*) nor feel bad for not doing so.

As for traders, cheating exists in most of their transactions, let alone defrauding what they intend to sell and undermining the price of what they intend to buy, and on the top of all that they drown in ignorance as well.

As for those who have children, I found that most of them instead of disciplining their children and teaching them what they need to know from religion, they busy them with the learning of commerce or a profession to earn money.

Then, I looked into the condition of women. I found that women in general are not religious and extremely ignorant. They seem to know nothing about the Hereafter, except for those whom Allāh guarded from such a trial.

So, I said: 'I wonder at the situation of the Muslims! If this is condition of the vast majority of Muslims then who is left from people to serve Allāh, the Most High, and learn about Him?'

I searched for the answer and found that it is scholars (*'ulamā'*), students of knowledge (*muta'alimūn*), the worshippers (*'ubād*) and ascetics (*mutazahidūn*). But then I realised that most of the worshippers and ascetics worship Allāh without knowledge (*'ilm*), they rejoice at having followers, or having people kissing their hands, they enjoy the praise and glory they receive from people. They may not even go to the market to buy what they need lest their glory and status be compromised. Their status elevates among the people until they no longer visit a sick person or witness the funeral of anyone, unless the deceased is someone they glorify. They also stop visiting others and may even make others feel they are doing them a favour for visiting them; as a matter of fact they become like idols that others worship without knowing so!

Some of them may even step forward to give rulings in religion (*fatawa*) despite their ignorance (*jahl*) just so they do not compromise their status as someone who is looked up to. Then they criticise scholars for attempting to seek lawful means of income in this life, but they do not know what they themselves are upon is what Islām actually condemns.

Then, I contemplated the situation of students of knowledge and noticed that only a few of them show the sign of intellect. This sign entails seeking knowledge to act upon it, while the majority of them seek knowledge either to make it a source of income, or to assume the position of a judge (*qāḍi*), or to ultimately distinguish themselves from others as only then, at that point, they stop learning.

As for the situation of scholars, I noticed that most of them are not only being manipulated by their whims (*hawā*), but also used by their own whims. For this reason, they favour what knowledge keeps him away from and look for what knowledge prevents him from; hence they can rarely find the sweetness (*halāwa*) resulting from any act of worship as their endeavours are limited to speaking out words.

Nevertheless, Allāh will always place on this earth people who stand out while combining both knowledge and acting upon such knowledge, minding the due rights of Allāh, the Most High, and fearing Him. These people are indeed the pillars of this world that Allāh will substitute them with other people in the same, if not better, rank when they are dead, and in some cases He may even let them live until they see their substitutes before He takes away their souls.

The example of this type of people is always on the earth and they are to people as how Prophets are to mankind. Such types of people, whom I have just described, fulfil and observe the fundamentals of the religion. They mind the limits set by Islām, though it may happen that their share of knowledge and good deeds are less. As for those whose qualities are perfect from all aspects, they are rare, and it could happen that the span of time between each one is very long.

I have investigated in depth all the people from the (generations of) righteous predecessors in the hope of finding a group of people who combined between superb knowledge, so they became revivers (*mujtahidūn*), and exceptional in worship, so they became role models to worshippers, and I could only find three people; Imām al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Imām Sufyān al-Thawrī and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. I have authored a special book about each one of them. If one adds Imām Saʿīd Ibn al-Musayyab as the fourth man that will not be something to be objected to.

[My limited selection to the above mentioned names only is because] though there are masters among the righteous predecessors, most of them were masters in a particular science or area while having lesser rank in other areas; some of them were known and famous for their knowledge. Others were famous and known for their worship, whereas each one of the previous I mentioned had an excessive share of knowledge and worship.

However, it is possible to find those who follow their steps, though they have the honour of being the first to have such virtue. For example, Allāh revealed to al-Khidr what was unknown to Mūsā [though Mūsā is a Prophet and higher in rank]. Indeed, the treasuries of Allāh are full and His Granting is not limited to any one person.

I was informed that Ibn ʿAqīl used to say about himself, 'I was in a ship but then it was broken [i.e. I am one of a kind]' and this is inappropriate to say because on what basis could he dare to make such a statement! Indeed, many are those who are fond of themselves but then it was revealed to them what made them despise themselves. For this you may find many people who came after, but excelled over the ones before them. It was said in poetry,

> 'Indeed the nights and days are pregnant,
> and only Allāh knows what they shall deliver.'

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Overpowering Impulses is an Immense Pleasure

I have noticed how the *'self'* inclines towards worldly pleasures (*hawāt*) and desires (*shahawāt*) more than it should, thereby influencing the heart (*qalb*), mind (*ʿaql*) and thoughts (*dhan*) strongly. Thus making it unwilling to take benefit from any advice (*nuṣḥ*) when reaching such a state.

When my *'self'* sought out a pleasure it desires with all the strength it has, I rebuked it and addressed it saying: 'Woe to you! Just hold on there for one second so I can share with you some words, then it is your choice to proceed or not.' It replied affirmatively, 'I am listening to you, so proceed.' I said, 'It is evident that you rarely incline toward lawful pleasures and most of the time you desire the forbidden.' So, I will reveal to you two things that may change your view and so you may find the sweet as bitter:

With respect to lawful desired matters, they have all been granted to you but the path to them is rugged and uneven. Because the wealth you have may not be adequate to afford them and the money you earn may not suffice to attain them all.

All the while the precious time [i.e. your life] will be wasted in pursuit of that accordingly. The heart will also be occupied with such desires at the time of achieving them, that when such desires are achieved, you will become concerned about losing them.

Let alone such pleasures and desires being imperfect, as is known by every intelligent person, if it is desire for food then you know that a replete stomach causes sickness, and if such desire is directed towards a person then you know that over time relationships become mundane or end up with each one apart from the other, or effected by his or her ill-temperament. As for sexual intercourse, you know when the ultimate sexual pleasure a person may have is most exhausting to the body and so forth.

With respect to the unlawful desires—in addition to all what have been previously mentioned—they damage the honour and bring forth the punishment in this life and exposure to scandal. As well as punishment in the Hereafter and the resulting panic of the repentant whenever he remembers committing his previous sins.

Subduing whims and fanciful desires is a pleasure that no other pleasure can equal. Do you not see how those who are in love endure humiliation because they are subdued by their love of their beloved ones? Contrary to the one who overpowers his emotions, his heart will be strong and proud because he subdued his emotions and desires.

Thus, beware and be warned of seeing the desired with the eyes of commendation, [and do not be like] the thief who sees the pleasure of stealing wealth while being unable to see the fact of what he is about the face in terms of punishment leading to the cutting of his hands.

Having said that, you should open the eye of your heart to contemplate the consequences, and understand that such unlawful pleasures eventually turn into bitterness [because of due punishments]; and that such pleasures change to become the opposite of what you had sought, either because of boredom or other defects, or because the beloved lost interest. Therefore, the first sin will be like a bite eaten by a hungry person that did not extinguish the hunger but rather stimulated the appetite.

For this reason, every person should keep in mind the pleasure of overpowering desires, and ponder on the benefits of being patient to avoid them.

Whoever succeeds in this regard will ensure his safety.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The Distractions of Life

While I was delivering a sermon in my assembly, hearts were present, eyes were running, heads were down in humility, souls were regretful for overlooking their duties, endeavours were made to rectify their affairs, tongues of blame admonishing the idle for being careless and slacking; so I asked myself, 'why does the state of awakening not last?' I see that the '*self*' (*nafs*) and the state of awakening get along together during the sermon but as soon as we leave the assembly, they depart from each other and become strangers to each other again.

After contemplating this situation I came to realise that '*the self*' is always awake and the heart is always aware but distractions are too many and the intellect people should dedicate to know Allāh, Most High, is exhausted from being utilised to achieve worldly pleasures and fulfilling the needs of the '*self*'.

All the while, the heart is overwhelmed by such a state and the body is a prisoner employed for such a purpose.

While thoughts roam around thinking of food, drink and clothes, and seeking the means from which they can be provided and thinking of what can be saved for difficult future times, the thought of excreting the harmful waste from the body and wanting purity afterwards comes to mind.

The '*self*' then becomes busy with how to relieve itself from harmful objects; including semen, thus it calls for the need of marriage. However, it realises it cannot marry without endeavouring to ensure a source of income, so it plans and works accordingly. Then when a person is blessed with a child, he spends all his time caring for and looking after him. At that point, it becomes obvious that the intellect and thoughts are being overwhelmed with all that concerns this worldly life.

As for when a person attends a gathering [where Allāh and the Hereafter are mentioned and remembered] he comes neither hungry nor lustful, but rather determined and focused, and completely forgetting all that which he was busy with from worldly affairs.

Therefore, the heart becomes empty of all worldly distractions and so when the preachment is given or a reminder is delivered, it takes over the heart and reminds the heart of what it is acquainted with and attracts it to what it knows. This encourages the servants of the heart to sail in the river of His knowledge and so brings the '*self*' to stand to account for what it has overlooked and blame it for its shortcomings, causing the eyes of regret to run with tears and the will of retraction from such a state to stand up firm.

If this '*self*' disconnects from all the distractions I mentioned, it would have become devoted to worshipping its Lord. And if it fell in the ocean of His love, it would have felt everything as strange while being in His service. This is why ascetics settle in solitude and obstructs all distractions; hence each one of them achieved from their worship according to the level of their striving in this regards, similar to how farmers reap only what they sow!

I however, have noticed a hidden meaning in all this, which is that, if the *'self'* was in a constant state of awakening it would have fallen trial to a calamity more than it would have when being heedless sometimes i.e. if the *'self'* was in a constant state of awakening, it will become too proud of its worship and despise those whose worship and striving are less. Even worse, it could reach a level at which it says, 'I am entitled for such and such and I deserve such and such.'

It is for this reason, it was left to flounder along in the pit of its sins, since then when it stands on the shore of safety it will stand with humility and hence will have fulfilled the due right of true servitude to Allāh and that is the best for it. This is indeed the situation of most people, which is the reason why they have been distracted from the actual purpose of their creation.

That said, whoever sows [i.e. worships and obeys Allāh] and rectified his affairs, will make a mistake or disobey Allāh at some point that the eye of his fear from Allāh's punishment will monitor so that his worship will be sound and his state of servitude to Allāh will be correct. This meaning has been indicated in the authentic ḥadīth when the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If you committed no sins, Allāh would have removed you and replaced you with other people who will sin and ask Allāh's forgiveness upon which they will be forgiven."[40]

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[40] Muslim, #2749 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiy Allahu 'anhu*).

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Criticism of Ignorant Ascetics (*mutaẓahidūn*)

I have been thinking and pondering until I realised that maintaining wealth is incumbent on every person and what the ignorant amongst the ascetics call reliance upon Allāh (*tawwaqul*) is giving away what one possesses is not prescribed in Islām. This is evident because the Prophet (ﷺ) said to his Companion Ka'b Ibn Mālik (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), "Keep for yourself some of your wealth"[41] and he also advised Sa'd (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), "Leaving your heirs with sufficient funds is better than leaving them in need for others' charity."[42]

If an ignorant person, however, decides to object to this by saying, 'Well, Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) gave away all his wealth [in a charity]'[43], the answer to him will be, 'Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) had a trade (i.e. business) and was known to have the trait of being resolute. Thus though he donated all of his wealth, he would still be able to take a loan (and trade) and live on it. I do not however criticise or condemn whosoever's financial condition and character is as such.

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[41] Bukhāri, #4676 and Muslim, #2769 on the authority of Ka'b Ibn Mālik (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

[42] Bukhāri, #5354 and Muslim, #1628

[43] Abū Dāwūd, #1678, Tirmidhī, #3675 and Ḥākim, 1/414 on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*)

Rather, I only condemn those who give away all their wealth while not having a source of income or a trade or a profession from which they can earn money. Those who may have a profession or a trade and after they give away their wealth they also abandon the source of income, so they end up depending on people's charity and begging others for aid. Thinking they have reached a higher spiritual level when in fact, their heart is attached to people as they seek what is in others hands.

These type of people become alert and their hearts become awake whenever they hear a knock on their door because they think they have received some aid. This is indeed an ugly attribute for a person who is able to work and support himself. And, it is even uglier when a person cannot work or support himself. Yet still gives away all his wealth as that will make his heart attached to what is in people's hands.

Even worse, he may humiliate himself in front of others or starts to show off with being an ascetic before those from whom they seek help [to convince them to help him]. And the least bad thing to happen is that such people will take away from the *zakah* that should be given to the poor, needy and permanent disable persons.

For this reason, you should hold fast to the way of the first generation of this nation; look and search if anyone of them ever did what the ignorant amongst the ascetic do! I mentioned in the beginning that our righteous predecessors (*Salaf al-Salih*) worked and earned what they would support themselves with and also left wealth for their heirs too.

That being the case, drink only from the first round bottle [i.e. follow the way of the early generations] as its water is pure and is not debased. Beware of the ways which have been debased with corrupted opinions and beliefs that not only deviate from religion, but also suggest that religion is incomplete and in need perfection.

Know—may Allāh direct you to success—that the body is like the ride, it should be maintained and looked after otherwise it will prevent you from continuing your journey.

Salmān al-Farsī (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*) was seen carrying his food on his shoulder. He was asked: ‘How come you do this though you are the Companion of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ)?’ He said, ‘When the ‘self’ assures its provision for the day, it feels secure.’

Sufyān al-Thawrī said: ‘After you ensure having the provisions of a month dedicate your time to worship.’

However, afterwards a new group of people emerged who have nothing but empty claims and so they said, ‘Such an act indicates having doubt in the Provider (Allāh) and to have faith and trust in Him is what should be done.’ So, beware of them and let them beware too. This kind of statement may even be mentioned by some of the ascetics amongst the righteous predecessors, but nevertheless, such statements should be ignored and do not be intimidated for opposing them in this aspect.

Abū Bakr al-Marūdhī narrated: ‘I heard Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal encouraging people to get married’, so I said to him: ‘But Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (opposes this view).’

He stopped me and did not let me continue and yelled at me saying: 'I mention to you the way of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and his Companions (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhum*) and you come to me with trivial opinions?'

Know—may Allāh direct you to success—that if a person claims being an ascetic and says, 'I shall not eat and drink, I will stay under the sun in hot days and I will not warm myself when it is cold', he is a sinful person by agreement of all scholars. And if a person who has a family says, 'I will not seek the means to support my family and Allāh will look after their provision' and when one of the members of his family was hurt because of that, he is sinful too.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "It is enough of a sin for a person to neglect those whose provision is his responsibility!"[44]

Know that working to earn what suffices you in life helps you to focus on your Hereafter, empties your heart from distractions, and hinders any desire you may have towards what people may have, because your innate nature has a right that must be fulfilled.

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained this meaning when he said, "The *'self'* has a right you should fulfil and your eyes have a right that you should also fulfil."[45]

The example of how the innate nature operates with a devotee is like a dog that does not recognize people, so it barks at every walking person but if someone throws to him a piece of food it remains silent.

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[44] Muslim, #996

[45] Bukhāri, #1153 and Muslim, #1159.

The object of looking after one's provision is only to remove concerns regarding this life so that one can focus on his Hereafter.

Therefore, you should understand this principle because understanding it is very important.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Desires are Deadly Traps

I have pondered over the desires (*shahawāt*) of this worldly life and understood that they are nothing but destructive and damaging traps. He whose intellect overpowers his nature will be safe whereas he whose nature overpowers his intellect will be quick to fall into ruin.

I have seen from among the people whose interest in worldly pleasures drives them towards (lawful) sexual intercourse, they tend to use what will entice their lust and arouse them, and yet their lustful instincts do not last long and eventually wear out.

In fact, I have never noticed any desire as fast to wear out as the desire for having sexual intercourse; because when a person is attracted to someone he desires, that necessitates him to release his semen, and if he sees more attractive women, he will be more aroused. So his disposed semen will be larger in quantity than before—and so this essence of life will vanish quickly.

On the other hand, when a man finds the woman with whom he will be with, to be unattractive, he will not discharge the accumulated harmful semen as it should, and should it remain inside the body, it will cause harm and increase his desire to be with an attractive woman.

The same applies to a person whose appetite is extreme, for doing so will compromise his health and the same applies to those whose appetite is less than it should be.

Thus, I concluded that the best way is to be moderate in everything. Because, this life is like a deadly desert; hence we should let our intellect lead us, since putting our innate natures and desires in charge will quickly ruin us.

What I have mentioned thus far is in reference to the body of humans and worldly life. Use the same analogy in the affairs of the Hereafter! So, understand it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

The True Asceticism (*zuhd*)

I was informed that someone presented to one of the ascetics (*zuhhād*) of our times some food, but he refused and said, 'I do not eat.' He was asked, 'Why not?' He said, 'Because my 'self' desires this food and I have not allowed myself to receive anything it desires for years.'

I commented there are two aspects to this issue where this person failed to conform to the right way and the reason for what he did is due to his lack of knowledge (*'adm al-'ilm*).

The first aspect why this understanding is fallacious (mistaken) is because neither the Prophet (ﷺ) nor his Companions (*radiy Allāhu 'anhum*) ever practised this way. On the contrary, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to eat chicken and love honey and sweets.

Farqad al-Sabkhī once entered upon al-Hasan [al-Basrī] and found him eating al-Faloudhaj. Al-Hasan asked him, 'O Farqad what do you say about this meal?' he said, 'I do not eat it and do not like who eats it.' Al-Hasan said, 'This meal is made of the honey of bees, seeds of wheat and the ghee of cows! How come a Muslim does not like it?'

A man once came to al-Ḥasan and said to him, ‘I have a neighbour who does not eat al-Faloudhaj.’ He said, ‘Why not?’ He replied, ‘He says that if he eats it he will not be able to thank Allāh enough for it.’ He said, ‘Your neighbour is an ignorant! Does he think he can even thank Allāh enough for drinking cool water?’

Sufyān al-Thawrī used to carry with him, during his travelling, Faloudhaj and grilled lamb and would say, ‘When the ride is looked after it will function right [i.e. if the body is looked after it will operate well].’

As for the practices that have been introduced by some ascetics afterwards, are practices taken from (Christian) monasticism (*rahabāniyya*). I thus fear the verse,

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟
لَا تُحَرِّمُوا۟ طَيِّبَٰتِ مَآ أَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوٓا۟

> “O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allāh has made lawful to you and do not transgress.”
> [*al-Mā'idah* (5):87]

There is also nothing preserved from any of the first generation (i.e. from the companions) having such acts, unless done for a reason [and not regularly].

As for what has been reported from ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhumā*) that he once desired something to eat and so he decided to give it to a needy person instead, and that he freed his female-slave, known as Rumaythah, even though he said, ‘She is the most beloved woman to my heart.’ This kind of actions and similar examples are good because these actions are about being selfless and preferring the interest of others over one’s own interest by giving away the best things that a person may have.

Besides, should this happen sometimes, then it's a good thing because it disciplines the self by not allowing it to receive everything it desires. As for whoever constantly opposes the [lawful] desires of his self, he actually blinds his heart, halts his thoughts, and distracts his endeavours, thus causing more harm than benefit.

Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham said, 'When the heart is forced, it becomes blind.'

This concise statement indicates a depth of meaning, which is: Allāh, Most High, created the innate nature of humans to select from desires what suits it and so the *'self'* chooses what rectifies its affairs.

Scholars of medicine said, 'The *'self'* should be allowed to eat what it desires [from lawful food], even if such food may have some harm in it, because it selects what suits it.' But, when an ascetic restrains his 'self' from [the lawful food] it wants [all the time] it will damage and harm his body.

If humans lacked the quality of natural desires, the body would not have survived [as then it will never desire food though it needs it to maintain its survival]. This is because the desire of food ravages but then is tamed as soon as it consumes what suffices it. That is why the desire is made of the wanted object, for the one who wants it and indeed it is the best motive that looks after the interests of the body.

However, if this desire is left uncontrolled the body will be harmed, and should this desire be restrained all the time—especially in cases when there is no harm going to happen when fulfilling its need, it will bring forth nothing but corruption and weaken the body causing various types of sicknesses. The example of this is like when a person forbids himself from drinking when he is very thirsty, or does not eat when he is very hungry; or does not have sexual intercourse when his lust (*shahwa*) is very active, or not sleeping when he is very tired, to the extent that a distressed person will be killed by his distress if he does not speak out about it to someone else.

If ascetics understood this principle (*asl*) they would understand that they have opposed the way of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiy Allāhu ʿanhum*); they opposed what have been narrated from them and opposed the wisdom of creation. This, however, is inapplicable to cases when the source of income is doubtful because in such a case leaving it is a form of piety.

Having said that, what I discussed in this section is related to abandoning what comes from lawful sources and through lawful means which does not affect the piety of a person. This is why all my previous explanations were in response to the statement of 'I never allow myself to fulfil its desire!'

The second aspect, due to which this understanding is fallacious, is that I fear that such ascetics' demanding desires transformed from the desire to have into the desire to abandon, thus he started to desire not to eat.

This side is very tricky and entails a hidden pretentiousness (*riya'*). Since if one does not become pretentious with people, the defect of such a trait will be related to his attachment to his action, and its effect on his heart. This is why it is not only risky but also wrong.

Some ignorant people may argue that what I have said is keeping people away from the good and from asceticism, which is not the case, because it has been proven authentic that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Every deed that does not conform to our way is rejected."[46]

Thus, no one should be fooled with the worship of Jurayj[47] and the piety of *Dhū'l-Khuwaisirah*![48]

There are plenty of ascetics who adopted ways that neither the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) nor his Companions (*radiyAllāhu 'anhum*) ever followed such as: exaggerating the extent of humility in worship, and wearing rough clothes excessively, and other similar acts that common people started to view as praised acts. Which ascetics started to use them as means to achieve worldly benefits such as having people kissing their hands, or receiving glorification, or even providing guarding and security for them. While, in fact, most of them, in public they act all pious and in their privacy their status and behaviour is totally different.

On the other hand, you find pious people like Ibn Sirīn who used to laugh loud in the presence of people and when he was alone at night he would weep so much so that a person may think he weeps that much because he killed the people of a village.

We really ask Allāh to grant us beneficial knowledge for it is the foundation. Whenever a person acquires such knowledge he will recognize (*mari'fa*) the worshipped Lord and be encouraged to serve Him as He commands and loves. It will lead him to the road of sincerity (*tarīq al-ikhlās*).

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[46] Bukhārī, #2697 and Muslim, #1718 on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*radiy Allāhu 'anhā*)

[47] He was a worshipper from Bani Isrā'īl. His story is narrated by both Bukhārī, #3436 and Muslim #2550 narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*)

[48] He is a man from Banu Tamīm his name is Harqūs. His story is too narrated by both Bukhārī, #3610 and Muslim, #1064.

The basis of all fundamentals (*asl al-usūl*) and principles is knowledge (*'ilm*), and the best kind of knowledge is looking at the stories of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*radiyAllāhu 'anhum*) for,

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ هَدَى ٱللَّهُۖ فَبِهُدَىٰهُمُ ٱقْتَدِهْۗ

> "Those are the ones whom Allāh has guided, so from their guidance take an example."
>
> [*al-An'ām* (6):90]

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Struggle Against Self-Desires (*jihād al-nafs*)

After pondering on the struggle against self-desires (*jihād al-nafs*), I realised it is the greatest kind of struggle (*a'ẓam al-jihād*). I also noted that many scholars (*'ulamā'*) and ascetics (*zuhhād*) seemingly do not understand its meaning because amongst them are some who prevent their *'self'* totally from having what it is entitled to, which is wrong for two reasons;

First: Preventing the self from fulfilling a [lawful] desire (*shahwa*) may introduce a worse desire.

For instance, a person may abstain from something lawful and so he becomes known for that. Then, he becomes content with what he does because he replaced what he abstained from with the praise of people for abstaining from it. Even worse, he may believe that because of abstaining from a particular lawful act that he has been favoured over others whom had not abstained from what he abstained from. This is a thoughtful meaning that is buried deep down and only tongs of sound understanding can pick up such meanings.

Second: We are ordained to preserve (*ḥifẓ*) and maintain the *'self'* and one of the means whereby the *'self'* is preserved is its inclining towards what maintains it, therefore providing it what maintain its survival becomes a must though most of, or all, what it inclines to are from what it desires.

And, we work as the guardians of our *'self'* because it is not ours to begin with, but rather something that Allāh entrusted us with, therefore to deny the rights and entitlements of the *'self'* is absolutely dangerous.

Let alone, strictness requires to have some leniency (*istirkha'*) [from time to time] and many are those who tightened (*mudayiq*) the situation on their 'self' until it could not handle it and was out of control, hence they became unable to control it anymore.

Struggle (*jihad*) of the *'self'* should be similar to the struggle of an intelligent person suffering some sickness (*marad*); he forces his *'self'* to accept eating and drinking what its dislikes just to ensure its recovery, he sweetens the bitter medicine a bit, and eats the types of food that his doctor prescribes for him. And he does not allow himself to fulfil its desire to eat what may cause hunger afterwards or even to eat a bite that prevents him from eating more bites later on.

Similarly, the intelligent believer does not leave the *'self'* unleashed or leave it without steering it, but rather shows some leniency while ensuring he is always in control.

If the *'self'* remains on track he will not disturb it, and if the *'self'* deviates a bit he will straighten it gently, but if it rebels or refuses to obey then he will straighten it by force.

Then, he needs to go along with his *'self'* just as he goes along with his wife whose sense of reasoning is weak and fragile [due to their strong emotional nature that affects their judgments] and hence it is advised when she disobeys, to abandon her [in bed] if she did not rectify her affair, and disciplined if she continues to disobey.

That being the case, the lash of the strong will is indeed the best type of discipline to use with the *'self'*. This is in respect of struggling in terms of exerting strenuous effort against the *'self'*.

As for preaching and admonishing the *'self'*, when a person notices his *'self'* is settled or inclines towards people's praise or does not mind low manners. One should educate and remind it of its high status in the sight of the One Who created it. One should say to it: 'Are you not the one whom Allāh said about you, 'I created you with My Hand and I commanded my Angels to prostrate to you.' He selected you to rule His earth, sent you His Messengers, Books, took a loan from you and bought from you?'[49]

And, if he notices any kind of arrogance he should say to it, 'How come you are arrogant when you know that you are created from a low water [i.e. semen], a choke can kill you and a bite of a bug would hurt you?' And if he notices that it has not been fulfilling its duties as it should be, he should remind it of the due rights of servants to their masters.

If it became slack or careless about doing good deeds, he should remind it of the excessive reward awaiting it. And if it is apt to follow its desires, he should remind it of the severe punishment awaiting it should it have proceeded in what it does, and warn it of the immediate physical punishment such as in what is said in the verse,

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[49] This refers to the verse, "*Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan...*" [*al-Baqarah* (2): 245], and "*Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth....*" [*al-Tawbah* (9):111]

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ ٱللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَٰرَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُم

> "Say, 'Have you considered: if Allāh should take away your hearing and your sight and set a seal upon your hearts."
> [*al-An'ām* (6):46]

and the intangible punishment such as what mentioned in the verse,

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ
فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ

> "I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right; and if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it."
> [*al-A'rāf* (7):146]

This is the kind of struggling through words (*jihād bi'l-qawl*) whereas the former is the struggling through action (*jihād bi'l-'amal*).

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Do not Panic if the Answer to Your Prayer is Delayed

I have noticed that it is a trial (*balā'*) when a believer invokes Allāh but his supplication (*du'ā'*) is not answered, even though he may repeat it for a long time! In such case, he should understand that this is a test that requires him to be patient, the whispers and suggestive thoughts that come to mind when the supplication of a person is delayed is a kind of sickness (*maraḍ*) that requires treatment.

I myself have been exposed to this kind of test. Once, I had a calamity and so I invoked Allāh [to remove this calamity] but my prayers (*du'ā'*) were not answered though I invoked Him excessively. This made the *Shayṭān* start whispering to me, 'If His generosity is without boundaries and miserliness (*bukhl*) is impossible, how come your supplication is not answered yet?' I said to him, 'O cursed one, be gone. I neither need you to advise me nor accept you as an advisor.'

Then I addressed myself, 'Beware of his whispers and suggestions. If delaying the answer of your supplication was only to test you to fight your enemy [i.e. *Shayṭān*] it would have sufficed as wisdom (*hikmah*).' The '*self*' asked: 'Console me so that I can handle the delay of the answering my supplication.' I said:

First: It is evident that Allāh, Most High, is the Owner (*al-Mālik*) of everything and the Owner has the right to give and prevent, and so you have no right to object to His Decision.

Second: The wisdom (*hikmah*) of Allāh is proven by unquestionable proofs, hence you may assume the benefit (*maslaha*) in a matter while, in fact, the wisdom of Allāh states otherwise. This is similar to how the wisdom of what a doctor does is unknown to the patient as he may do things that give the impression they are harmful while such actions are intended to bring forth benefit. Thus, delaying the answer of your supplication can be just like this.

Third: There might be a benefit (*maslaha*) to you when the answer of your supplication is delayed and may cause harm should the prayer have been answered immediately. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The slave [of Allāh] will be fine so long he is not hasty and says, 'I supplicated but my prayers were not answered.'"[50]

Fourth: The answer to your supplication might be blocked (*imtinā'*) due to a defect (*āfat*) in you specifically your food could be from a doubtful (*shubha*) source, or your heart (*qalb*) was heedless (*ghafla*) at the time of invoking (*du'ā'*), or you are being punished for a sin (*dhamb*) you have not sincerely repented from.

That being said, you should investigate some of these reasons so you may understand why the answer was delayed.

It was reported that a non-Arab took over the house of Abū Yazīd

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[50] Bukhārī, #2740 and Muslim, #2735 on the authority of Abū Haurayrah (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*)

(*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*). When he saw that, he entered the house and removed a new mud brick that he recently added to the house. Then, he asked his companions to remove the new mud bricks. Upon removing the block the man left the house. He was asked about what happened and so he said, 'That block of mud was received from a doubtful source and as soon as the doubt was removed from the house, the harm was also gone.'

It was also reported that Ibrāhīm al-Khawwas once went to advise against a wrongdoing (*munkar*), but while he was on the way a dog started to bark at him and did not let him pass. So, he returned to the Masjid, prayed and then walked to advise against the wrongdoing again. When he reached where the dog was, the dog started to wag it's tail and let him pass. When he reached his destination and advised against the wrongdoing. He was asked about what happened and he answered, 'I had a sin, thus the dog stood in my way but when I returned to the Masjid I repented from that sin, and so it happened as you saw.'

Fifth: You should think of the outcome of receiving what you asked for because it is possible that if you had what you asked for, that would increase your sins (*ithm*) or stop you from attaining a high rank (*martaba*); therefore not answering your supplication was for your own good.

It was reported that one of the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) used to constantly ask Allāh to give him the opportunity to partake in battles (*ghazwa*) until one day he heard a voice saying "If you participate in the battle you will be captured, and if you are captured you will apostate".

Sixth: It is possible that not having what you ask for will keep you standing at the door of Allāh asking Him and seeking His help, whereas having what you asked for will make you busy with it and also neglectful of the One you asked.

This is seemingly the case because if you had no need of something to ask for, you would have not invoked Allāh seeking His help.

This is why when people become too busy with the blessings of Allāh, Exalted is He; He tests them in these blessings pushing them to his gate begging for His help. For this reason, such trials and tests are actually blessings from Allāh but have been concealed in the form of a trial.

This is because a true trial is when a person is being too busy in a worldly matter to remember His Lord whereas a trial that makes you stand before Him praying and invoking is what make you beautiful.

It was reported that Yaḥyā al-Bakka' saw his Lord in his dream and he asked him, 'O Lord, I always invoke You but You do not answer my supplications' so He said to him, 'O Yaḥyā, I like to hear your voice [invoking me].'

If you contemplate on all these things you will busy yourself with what will benefit you; you will rectify your affairs, repent from a sin, and stand at the door of the Lord of all lords.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Dealing with Hardships

Let he who suffers a calamity or a hardship and wishes to overcome its impact, think of worse calamities and hardships than his as that will make him belittle his hardship.

Let him envision the received reward for enduring it patiently, and imagine a greater trial has befallen him [to belittle his current trial] and he shall see such hardships as a roaring trade.

Let him also anticipate that his calamity will be removed in the near future, because if the hardship was not severe, the hours of ease would not have been hoped for.

Let him also know that the example of a calamity is like a guest; it does not stay for a long time and so having it over should make the host always check on it to fulfil its rights because it will not last long until it leaves!

And receiving its praise for how he handled it is indeed gratifying and it is enough to be described as the generous host. That being said, the believer during times of difficulties should pay attention to his time and continually check on the condition of his self.

Furthermore, he should monitor his limbs so that his tongue or heart does not utter a complaining word against the decree of Allāh. Because when the dawn of reward is on the horizon, the night of calamities will leave, and the traveller is complimented for crossing the night. So that as soon as the sun of reward rises up, he will have already arrived at the safety house.

CHAPTER FORTY

Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Deeds (*ʿamal*)

Having noticed that my *'self'* values and appreciates knowledge (*ʿilm*), and hence it gives knowledge the priority over everything else, it abides by the existence of evidence [in order to perform any action]. Learning and teaching this religious knowledge has been given preference over other supererogatory acts (*nawāfil*) of worship.

Questioning the accuracy of such a position, I, myself, defended its stance in this regard and so forwarded the following argument; The proof that knowledge is more superior; more virtuous than all other supererogatory acts of worship, is that most of whom, you know, who opt for supererogatory praying and fasting, overlook learning the knowledge, which results in a damage in their fundamentals. This has sufficed me to know that I am upon the right path and following the correct view. However, seeing how my *'self'* is all-focused on knowledge [without looking into its purpose] enticed me to question and warn it; by saying:

"What beneficial impact has having this knowledge had on you?

Why is the sense of fearing Allāh not growing? Why do you seem to have no distress about the Hereafter?

Why do you seem to not have any sort of cautiousness regarding your final destination?

Have you not heard of the stories and news of the tireless endeavours and worship of the good worshippers of old times?

Did you not know that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) is the master of all beings but still he prayed all night until his feet were swelling?[51]

Did you not know that Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) was known for his excessive weeping when praying?

Did you not know that 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) had two dark lines on his cheek from the amount of tears he cried?

Did you not know that 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) used to recite the entire Qur'ān in one unit of prayer (*rak'ah*)?

Did you not know that 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) used to weep at night while he was praying in his niche until his beard became all wet while saying, 'O worldly life, you may tempt someone else but not me?'

Did you not know that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī lived all his life being worried about his Hereafter?

Did you not know that Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyab was a patron in the *Masjid* and so he did not miss a congregational prayer (*ṣalah*) in the

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[51] Bukhārī, #1130 and Muslim, #2819 on the authority of Mughara Ibn Shubah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

Masjid for forty years?

Did you not know that al-Aswad Ibn Yazīd Ibn Qais al-Nakhaʿī [from the Tābiʿīn] used to fast until his skin colour changed and became yellow?

Did you not know that when the daughter of al-Rabīʿ Ibn Khaytham asked her father: 'Why do I see people sleep at night while you are still awake?' He answered, 'Your father fears the punishment of grave.'

Did you not know that Abū Muslim al-Khawlanī used to hang a whip on the wall of the *Masjid* to alert himself with it lest he felt lazy while praying?

Did you not know that though Yazīd al-Ruqashī fasted forty years, he kept saying, 'Woe to me, the worshippers are still ahead of me?'

Did you not know that al-Manṣūr Ibn al-Muʿtamir fasted for forty years?

Did you not know that Sufyān al-Thawrī used to cry blood because of his fear of Allāh?

Did you not know that Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham used to urinate blood because of his fear of Allāh?

Did you not know the supreme level of worship and asceticism of the four well-known Imāms; Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad?"

So, beware of occupying yourself with knowledge while neglecting acting upon it because this is indeed the state of those suffering permanent laziness.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

The Cause and its Originator

Knowing some people who focus on worship while neglecting the seeking of knowledge (*ʿilm*) has made me value and appreciate the virtue of knowledge more. Because worship alone could not make them reach the facts and the reality that is found at the end of the tunnel of worship.

It was reported that once a person called out to someone, 'O Abū al-Walīd, if you were really Abū al-Walīd' as he thought it is piety not to call him the father of a son when he did not have one! If this person looked into the knowledge, he would have realised that the Prophet (ﷺ) called Suhayb "Abū Yaḥyā" and named a child "Abū ʿUmayr".[52]

One of the ascetics said, "I was asked one day to drink some milk but I denied the request and said, 'it harms me'. Then after some time I stood in front of the Kaʿbah and said, 'O Allāh, you know I never associated a partner with you even for a blink of an eye!' Then I heard a voice saying, 'Even at the time you were asked to drink milk?"

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[52] Bukhārī, #6129 and Muslim, #2150 on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiy Allahu ʿanhu*).

If this report is assumed true then it would be a form of discipline for him so that he does not attach himself to the causes, while forgetting the One who generated the causes, otherwise recognising the cause [without overlooking the One who made the cause] was reported from the Prophet of Allāh (ﷺ) who said, "I still feel the pain caused by the poisoned meal I ate at the time of Khaybar every year and this year it will cut off the vein to my heart."[53] He (ﷺ) also said, "There is no money that benefited me as much as did the money of Abū Bakr."[54]

From amongst the ascetics is a group who believes that reliance on Allāh means to overlook all the causes and means, which is a belief that demonstrates how ignorant they are because the Prophet (ﷺ) sought the means, thus he hid in the cave to escape the disbelievers, consulted the doctor when he was sick, put on the armour in wars, dug the trench to avert the attack of Quraysh, sought refuge with al-Mutʿim Ibn ʿAdi though he was a disbeliever, and said to Saʿd (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*), "Leaving your heirs with sufficient funds is better than leaving them in need for others' charity."[55]

However, at the same time, to consider the causes and means while forgetting the One who created and generated the causes and means is also wrong.

All this darkness of ignorance (*ẓulma al-jahl*) can vanish by the light of knowledge.

Thus, whoever walks in the darkness of ignorance or in the ally of desires will surely be astray and misguided.

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[53] Bukhārī, #4428 on the authority of al-Sā'ib Ibn Yazīd (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*).

[54] Tirmidhī, #3661, *Musnad* Aḥmad, #2/253-366, Ibn Mājah #94, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*). It is ṣaḥiḥ, see Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah, 1/36.

[55] Bukhārī, #5354 and Muslim, #1628

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Humans (*insān*) and Angels (*malak*)

I still wonder at whoever still believes that Allāh favours Angels (*malā'ika*) over Prophets and close-friends of Allāh (*awliyā'*) because if such favouritism is based on the images of each kind then be sure that the image of mankind is more astonishing than the image of those with wings.

And if you disregard the image of humans because of the impurity and filth a human generates. Then know that the image you see is just a modelled form and not what makes a human being, let alone that Allāh praises in humans what is often dispraised. Such as the bad smell of the mouth due to fasting, the blood of the martyrs, sleeping [without praying at night just because he intended sincerely but was unable to] and so forth. Thus, the image of humans becomes vivid as the ruling is given based on the meaning that such images resemble.

Do Angels even have the rank of?

يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُۥٓ

"They love Him and He loves them."

[*al-Mā'idah* (5):54]

Or even the rank of talking about our magnificence?[56]

Despite the outcome, they prostrated to us, which suffices as evidence that we are favoured over them. If favouring would be based on knowledge then we all know the story when they said,

لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ

"we have no knowledge..."

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 32]

and

يَٰٓـَٔادَمُ أَنۢبِئْهُم بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ

"O Adam, inform them of their names..."

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 33]

and if favouring would be based on their essence of creation then know that the essence of our souls is from the same essence as them and then added to the weight of our bodies. Indeed, a rider needs his camel, therefore he stops from time to time to look after it, maintain it and be gentle with it in order for it to carry him swiftly.

I wonder! How do you still believe Angels are favoured over humans due to their excessive worship when you know they are created with no desires (*shahwa*)? Does running water or a waterfall whose water is speedily falling surprise you?

Indeed, if anything should surprise you it should be a person who walks through his journey and overcomes all obstacles. Given their endowed power to break down mountains and split the earth, assuming they may dispute or even claim Lordship is possible, Allāh warned them:

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[56] See Muslim, #2701

وَمَن يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّىٓ إِلَٰهٌ مِّن دُونِهِۦ فَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِيهِ
جَهَنَّمَ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

> "And whoever of them should say, 'Indeed, I am a god besides Him'—that one We would recompense with Hell. Thus do We recompense the wrongdoers."
>
> [*al-Anbiyā'* (21):29]

But since they understand the punishment if this happens, they never dare do so. In contrast, mankind is far from acquiring the full knowledge of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), and so have less certainty (*yaqīn*).

And we are created with whims (*hawā*) and desires (*shahwa*) as well as heedlessness (*ghafla*), therefore further and greater efforts are needed to struggle against all that, which makes it a much greater struggle than what Angels go through.

By Allāh, if any Angel was tested with what we have been tested he would not have handled it. We are created and addressed and directed by the Legislator, to support our family and ensure our source of income is lawful, all the while, we are influenced by what is beyond our actions such as loving the family, having the heart attached to one's children and needs of the body that cannot be ignored.

At one time, Prophet Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) is ordered to slaughter his son, the fruit of his heart, with his own hands. At another time he was prepared to be thrown into a fire by a ballista, and Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) was ordained to fast a month, day and night. The angry is ordered to hold his anger, the seeing to lower his gaze, the speaker to be silent, the sleeper to get up and pray at night, the one whose beloved is deceased to be patient, the one hurt to be thankful, and the fighter in the battle not to run away. Then, we are informed that death comes with the severest bitterness as it pulls the soul out of the body. Thus we should be firm, and that we will be ruined in the grave. and yet we are ordered not to complain against the decree of the Lord. And do not complain to people about your sickness and pain.

How far is all that from the Angels who only worship, as this is their innate nature, and hence they neither resist an opposing nature nor defy desires.

Unlike us, their worship lacks the essence of meaning, though its outer exists in the form of prostration (*sujūd*), bowing (*rukūʿ*) and exaltation (*tasbih*) of Allāh. Besides, most of them are at our service; some record our deeds, some divert harm from us, some were created to handle rain and wind, and the greatest duty of theirs is to ask Allāh to forgive us.

Having said all that, how is it that someone still argues that they are favoured over us though there is not any clear evidence to support the argument?

On top of all that, if some of them are tested such as what was reported to happen to Harūt and Marūt, the outcome of their test is disastrous.

No one should think that I believe or even think that the worship of Angels is inadequate, because their extreme solicitude (*ishfaq*) and fear (*kawf*) of Allāh is due to their factual knowledge and certainty of the Magnificence of the Creator (*aẓamat al-Khāliq*). What I intend to say is that the tranquillity (*tamaninah*) of whoever is never mistaken should strengthen himself, whereas the case of a person whose annoyance results from his sins should elevate his soul to reach the highest levels.

O brothers, you should know your noble (*sharaf*) status as a human being, and protect your essence from debasing it with the regret of sins because you have been favoured over Angels. So beware of being lowered to the rank of animals because of your sins!

Indeed, there is no power and will except with Allāh, the Greatest.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

The Mystery behind Concealing the Essence of Allāh

I have noticed many people as well as a group of scholars who seem not to stop their attempts investigating and searching for the details, origins and basis of things that they are ordained to know about in the general sense without conducting further investigation about such knowledge. For instance, Allāh concealed the matter of the soul (*rūḥ*) and so He said,

قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْـرِ رَبِّى

“Say, ‘The soul is of the affair [i.e., concern] of my Lord.’”
[*al-Isrā'* (17): 85]

but that has not sufficed them therefore they began to search for its essence and reality without finding any information or even acquiring a single proof to support what they may suggest about it. Another example is the mind (intellect) of humans, which exists similar to how the soul exits without a doubt, but both of them are recognised by their effect and impact, and not by their actual entities.

If someone asks, what is the wisdom for hiding (*sirr*) such knowledge? I reply: 'It is because the *'self'* (*nafs*) of a person continues to gradually elevate from one stage to another. Thus, if it was informed of the details of this hidden knowledge, it would have elevated to the rank where it will be fully acquainted with its Lord. Because of that, hiding what is below the Lord is to amplify His Glory and Greatness (*ta'ẓīm*) to show humans that if some of His creation cannot be known by details, then it befits to know that they cannot know Him in details for He is Higher and more Exalted.'

If someone asks, "What are thunders, lightning and earthquakes?" I say, "Annoying events, and that should be enough to know". The wisdom behind hiding such knowledge is that by having revealed the reality of such events will cause people to have less magnification towards them.

Whoever pays attention to this section will understand how precious and valuable it is because since humans have the inability and incapacity to acquire the knowledge of some of the mysteries of creation, then acquiring the knowledge about the Creator, whose nature and essence is Higher and Superior, would be impossible. Humans should however, look for evidence by which His existence is proven and then establish the reason for sending His Messengers; then take the knowledge of His Attributes from the revealed Books through His Messengers, and then investigate it no further. Many people have investigated and discussed the Attributes of Allāh based on their mere opinions and interpretations causing them a severe harm in their religion.

The fact that we know He exists and that He said (about Himself being) Hearing (*sami'*), Seeing (*baṣīr*), Living (*ḥayy*) and Powerful (*qadīr*) etc, should suffice us regarding His [Divine] Attributes (*Ṣifāt*). We should thus not delve into additional matters; and also assume the same in relation to the Qur'ān; we say, 'He speaks and the Qur'ān is His speech' without adding anything beyond that. The righteous predecessors neither said the Qur'ān is made of a recitation and recited nor it is a reading and read. Nor did they say "He is above His throne in His Essence (*Dhāt*)" or "He descends in His Essence". Rather, they perceived such texts related to His Attributes as is (upon the apparent), without adding anything to them.

The above are just examples you should apply to all other Attributes. Should you succeed in doing so, you will be safe from both, denying any of His Attributes or believing that any of His Attributes are similar to His creation.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

The Wisdom behind the Existence of the Ignorant

I have noticed that many people seem to live in a vain and state of loss; not knowing their Creator (*al-Khāliq*). Some acknowledge His existence according to their senses, and some do not seem to understand the purpose of His legislations.

While some of the ascetics spend their lives worshipping and abandoning their desires yet (ironically) forgetting their desirous indulgence in fame and having people kiss their hands! Thus, if one of them was criticised he would say, 'How come such words are being said to a person like me?' And if a sinner is mentioned he would belittle him! The same is found among some scholars who belittle others and think highly of themselves. These types of people do not seem to understand the purpose of what they are ordained to do. This makes me wonder how they can be of good worthy material to be in Paradise!

However, I came to conclude that the benefit of having them in this life is homogenous with the benefit of having them in Paradise, because in this life they are either set as an example to reflect upon—the one who knows his Lord will appreciate the grace those people did not have; hence the order is established through following the example of the said people—or they are subordinates whose existence is needed to maintain the life of others as life is only valid with such differences between people.

However, there are some differences between the favoured people, i.e. the one who knows his Lord has no time to waste with a person who perceives only the outer aspects of worship; the ascetic is like a shepherd, the scholar is like a child discipliner, and the one who knows his Lord is like a teacher of wisdom. Should the king not have those who serve him such as the guards, servants, cooks and ration supervisors, his life would not be managed.

In order for the life of a person, who knows his Lord, be more perfect, he should be able to utilise all these people accordingly. If any of them succeeded in reaching him, he would help them reach true knowledge. As for those who do not succeed in this regard, they merely become an unnecessary addition to life that does not have much benefit.

If someone asks, 'Let's assume this is the case in this worldly life, so what about the fact that they will be in Paradise too?' The answer to this is that humans need to have company so they feel a sense of intimacy and understand the imperfect brings joy to the perfect by knowing his perfection, thus each type has its own stage and level.

Whoever contemplates what I have mentioned will be sufficed with the symbolism of my words and will be in no need for a long explanation.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

The Reflection of Nature

I contemplated the greatness of the Creator at rendering my provision in this world through the life circle of nature—in that it all starts by the driving of clouds that brings down the rain to earth gently, while the seeds of plants are buried underneath just like rotten dead bodies awaiting the resurrection.

And when raindrops hit the seeds they agitate turning from yellow and deathly into green and [full of] life. Had the supplies been cut, plants would stretch their hands out begging for water while lowering their heads in humility and wearing garments of ruin.

I concluded that plants are in need of what I am in need of too; the heat of the sun, the coolness of water, the smooth breeze, and (a healthy) earth to grow in. May He be Exalted for showing me what shall discipline me; how I am raised.

It is indeed a shame for the *'self'* that has been acquainted with some of His wisdom and signs, to turn to anyone other than Him.

I truly wonder at you when I see you turning to another who is as helpless as you and whose state of condition says to you, 'my situation is as exactly as yours!'

You should turn to the Originator and seek the help and aid of the Causer.

If you succeed to know Him, then glad tidings are for you because knowing Him ensures your success in this life and the Hereafter.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Devoting Oneself to Allāh

In the early years of my life I was inspired and guided to follow the way of those who practise asceticism (*zuhd*) by consistently fasting (*ṣawm*) and praying (*ṣalah*). I was fond of secluding (*khalwa*) myself from everyone to worship my Lord. During my solitude I enjoyed having a good kind heart (*qalb*) and my insight was strengthened. I grieved over every moment I did not spend in worship and obedience (*ṭa'at*), this encouraged me to take advantage of every moment to perform good deeds and acts of worship; while enjoying the intimacy (*uns*) with my Lord and the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) I have tasted while invoking Him in privacy.

Then persons in position of authority liked my preaching and so they drew me close to them, this changed my nature and so I lost the taste of such sweetness.

Another such person of authority wanted to draw me close to him but I abstained from consorting with him and refused to eat from his food because of the doubtfulness of what he offered. Thereafter, I became inclined towards interpreting the situations I experience and the things that happen to me in a convenient manner, to gain some ease I began to indulge in enjoying what is lawful.

This made me lose my tranquillity (*sakīna*) and insightfulness (*istināra*).

Therefore, consorting people brought forth darkness (*ẓulma*) into my heart until the light (*nūr*) I found in my heart had completely vanished.

Since then, I could not conceal the yearning I had to return to what I had lost during the sermons I delivered, which were effectual enough to change the people who attended my sittings. This made people repent and rectify their affairs; all the while pitying for losing what I had myself.

The whining of my distressed troubled my heart increased and I failed to treat myself or recover from such condition. Hence I sought my comfort in visiting the graves of the pious and asked from Allāh the grace of rectifying my affairs upon which the Kindness of my Lord pulled me toward the sphere of solitude (*khalwa*), despite the resistance of my [desirous] self.

Only then was my heart restored after being detached from me, and so I was shown the defects of what I had previously favoured [in this life]. I woke up from the sickness of my inadvertency. And I uttered the following words while I was invoking Allāh during the time of my solitude; 'O my Master, how can I thank you enough?' And what laudatory words can my tongue utter to praise (*madḥ*) you enough? For I truly and deeply thank (*shukr*) you for absolving my heedlessness (*ghafla*)! Awakening me from my sleep, and rectifying my affairs though my [desirous] *'self'* disliked it. Indeed, what has been taken away from me brought me nothing but gain since it was the reason because of which I turned to you! Indeed, what I have saved is tremendous since the outcome was that my heart was apt to be in solitude with You. Indeed, how affluent I am when You made me in need of You! Indeed, how affable I am when You disheartened me from being with others.

O Lord, I regret every moment I have not spent in Your service! I have remorse for the time I spent in matters other than your obedience. For example, I used to wake up for *Fajr* without being distressed for sleeping all night long [not having awoken to pray at night] and I used to witness the commencement of night without having any concern for knowing the day had passed [not regretting the moments I did not spend in your worship] as I did not realise the reason for not having any such feelings was because of the severity of the illness of my heart. Now however, after the arrival of the winds of healthy change, I have managed to sense the pain through which I was directed to my healthiness.

O You whose grace is tremendous, I beseech You to maintain and perfect my safety and healthiness.

What an intoxication whose roistering is unnoticed until after becoming conscious! I have torn apart what is difficult to amend, hence regretting the merchandise [i.e. good deeds] I have lost; my example is like a sailor who struggled with the northern troubled waves for some time, then he was overpowered by sleepiness and so when he awoke found himself back at his first starting location.

O you who read my warning against indulging in the lawful! Though I betrayed myself in my actions, I sincerely advice my brethren in words and say, beware of opting for a concession in a matter whose danger and harm cannot be guaranteed to be saved from. This is because the *Shaytan* beautifies the permissible at the first stage then, afterwards, he drags people to sins, therefore take heed of the consequences of your actions, understand well your condition and circumstances.

Though the *Shaytān* may convince you of proceeding with a matter by deceiving you by showing you the good purpose of it, you should know that the road he is leading you down will make you fall into sin. Therefore, it is enough to learn from your father; Adam, who was deceived by the *Shaytān* when he suggested to him

هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ ٱلْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ ﴿١٢٠﴾

> "'O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?'"
>
> [*Tāhā* (20): 120]

Adam then noticed nothing but the promised achievement, which was immortality, but he took the wrong way. This is indeed one of the most deceitful traps of *Shaytān*[57] through which he tricks scholars. He entices them to hope for good consequences, while they end up hastening the harm of risky matters. For instance, the Shaytān may whisper to a scholar, 'you should visit that oppressor so that you may intercede for the oppressed.'

The scholar thus rushes to observe and investigate the wrongdoings of the oppressor—and through such exposure, his religious commitment is shaken. Worse still, he may fall into an act of disbelief (*kufr*) by which he becomes more of an oppressor than that oppressor himself. Therefore, whoever does not trust his religious commitments (and not confident of his piety and firmness) should beware of the trappings; because they are concealed and unnoticed.

The safest yard for the concerned for his religion is solitude, particularly in times when goodness is dead or diminished and wrongdoing is alive; and people of knowledge have no influence over those in authority. In the case of the latter, if a scholar interacts with them, he will expose himself to the unlawful and also be incapable of pulling them out of their sins.

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[57] For more information on the traps of *Shaytān*, please refer to Ibn al-Jawzi's momentus work entitled '*Talbis Iblis*', which has been translated into English, '*The Devil's Deception*' published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK, 1st ed, 2014.

Needless to mention, when a person contemplates the condition of scholars who assume positions under their authority, will notice how they are completely detached from the benefit of knowledge, thus becoming just like police officers. Therefore, solitude and avoiding all invalid and corrupted interpretations and assumptions about socialising is the only way to save oneself. That being the case, should I benefit myself alone is indeed way much better than benefiting others while harming myself.

Beware! beware of the deceptive interpretations and corrupted issued verdicts (*fatawa*), endure what solitude necessitates because when you are alone in the company of your Lord, He will open for you the gate of His knowledge, hence all difficulties will be eased, all bitterness will be enjoyable, all hardship will be relieved and all goals will be achieved.

Indeed, Allāh directs people to success by His grace as there is no power or will except with Allāh alone.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Allāh, Most High, cannot be deceived

After thinking deeply about a permissible act from which I can derive a worldly benefit, I came to realise it would compromise the idea of piety (*wara'*) as it milks out the core of religion causing the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of my worship to dissipate; affecting the milk of this worldly life as well, thereby I end up losing both statuses.

I said to my '*self*', 'your example is like an oppressing ruler who collected his money from unlawful sources, then not only all of what he collected was confiscated, but he was also made to take responsibility beyond that eve.'

Hence, beware and beware again from corrupted interpretations (*tawīl*) and justifications because Allāh, Most High, cannot be deceived and none can receive His grace through disobeying Him.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Healing the Body is a Reason to Rectify Religion

I noticed that every time I clear my mind, or am touched by the death of someone, or I visit the graves of the righteous, I find myself keener for, and rushing towards solitude (*'uzla*) and devoting myself to the worship of Allāh.

One day, however, the following monologue took place in which I addressed my 'self' concerning its ebullience for solitude;

I said to my *'self'*: Tell me; what is the purpose you try to achieve from all this? What do you really wish to accomplish at the end of it? I feel you want me to live in a deserted place faraway from people so I end up missing the congregational prayer (*salah*) and forsaking the knowledge I have acquired—as I will not have anyone to deliver it to!

I believe you would like me to get used to consuming unnourished food that I am not used to so I become weak and unhealthy in few days. To wear rough clothes that I cannot endure and whose roughness makes me unaware of myself. Overlook having children who would worship Allāh after my death, while I am capable of having a wife and having children!

By Allāh, the knowledge I have acquired and learned all my life will be of no benefit should I have complied with your wishes! I will therefore pinpoint your errors and faults with insight.

Know the body is like a ride that needs be looked after if you wish it to take you to your destination. I however, do not intend to look after it to indulge in desires, but rather to provide the body with what maintains its health so that your mind becomes clear, your intellect becomes sound, and your memory becomes strong.

Have you not noted the impact such obstacles have on the clarity of mind (*ṣafā' al-dhan*), which the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned when he said, "A judge should never rule between two persons when he is angry."[58] Based on this ḥadīth, using the principle of analogy, scholars deduced that the same applies to hunger and any factor with the same effect, including the situation when a person has an urge to relieve himself.

This is because the habitual custom of being is like a dog whose only concern is food. Hence, he enjoys it regardless of what you may throw to him.

As for solitude (*ʿuzla*) and isolation (*infirād*), they should only be in the events of evil—in that a person should keep himself far away from evil (*sharr*) affairs and seek the means of goodness (*khayr*). This is because, if complete solitude was of any benefit, it would have been reported as a practice from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) or his Companions (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhum*).

But, how far they are from their path! I came to know some people whose endeavours to remain abstinent eventually made them suffer mental disturbance and confusion, causing them to avoid people as they felt estranged from them. This lifestyle caused some to consume inedible food so they remained without food for two or three days believing they are under preordained care while, in fact they were suffering malnutrition and indigestion!

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[58] Bukhārī, #7158 and Muslim, #1717.

Some of them whose case was more severe became too confused and delusional, confusing Jinn with Angels!!

I wonder at those who overlook knowledge and sanity even though both assure one's safety from such disturbances. Neither the light of sanity should be exposed to what may extinguish it, nor should the rank of knowledge ever be undermined. Keeping these two characteristics ensures the fulfilment of duties, forestalling the harm, and bringing forth the benefit—hence the measures of food and drink and affiliating with people will be sound and accurate.

My '*self*' responded: 'In such a case, assign me to perform one task and consider me a patient whom you have written a prescription for.'

I replied: 'I have already directed you to knowledge, which is a doctor that never departs you at any time as it will write for you a prescription suitable to treat every illness you may suffer.'

In any case, you should constantly fear (*taqwā*) Allāh, Exalted be He, in all situations; reasoning, observation and actions of the body. Assure the lawfulness of your food, invest every moment of your life in good, take advantage of the time to achieve what is most clear, and abstain from what may cause the depreciation or the loss of your profit [in the Hereafter]!

And beware of proceeding into any action without sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), and be prepared for death as it may strike you at any moment.

Do not compromise the safety and the health of your body and ensure your body operates according to what common sense and rightness advocates, and not what you desire it to. Because having a healthy body will help you maintain and rectify your religiosity. You should also leave reckless and slack behaviour that is advocated by ignorance (*jahl*)—such as comforting yourself by knowing someone who lives on mere vinegar or someone who does not sleep at night.

Take only what you can handle and bear what you know your body is capable of, because even the animal, if its owner makes it stand on the bank of a river then hits it to jump to the other side, it would not jump from one side to another until it weighs its ability to succeed the jump, so it does not jump if it realises its incapability; even if that will lead to being killed.

This is while knowing that the tolerance level of bodies is unequal and diverse. Therefore the indulgence of some people into struggles and hardships at the beginning of their journey [on the road of asceticism] caused them sicknesses that left them unable to practice some of the good deeds, and caused their hearts to be exasperated accordingly. It is for this reason you need to hold fast to knowledge for it is the cure of every sickness.

And Allāh is the One who directs to success.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Knowledge Falsifiers (would-be people of knowledge)

I wonder at those who claim to possess knowledge (*ʿilm*) and yet incline towards anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) because of their understanding of religious texts based on their apparent meanings. Had they accepted these ḥadīths as they had received them, they would have assured their own safety because when a person takes these ḥadīths as they are, without objection or interpretation, this is a person who neither said what can be used against him nor in his favour.

In the other extreme, knowledge of some people was inadequate so this caused them to assume the understanding of divine texts differently to their apparent meaning, which is a type of negation [of Allāh's attributes] (*taʿṭīl*) while, if they comprehended the broad scope of the Arabic language, they would not have assumed so.

The example of this group who only take the apparent meaning is like when al-Ḥajjaj said to his servant after hearing al-Khansā's poetry praising him: 'Cut her tongue.' The foolish servant immediately pulled out a knife in order to cut her tongue but al-Khansā stopped him and said, 'Woe to you!' The meaning of what he said implied giving her what she wants until she is content. Then she went to al-Ḥajjaj complaining to him saying, by Allāh, your servant was about to cut my tongue for real. This was also the method of the Dhahirī people who were not sufficed with accepting texts as they are. In contrast however, if a person recited verses and ḥadīths without adding his own interpretation, I would never blame him or criticize him because that is the method of the righteous.

As for those who say the ḥadīth entails such and such or is interpreted to have such and such a meaning, are actually adding to the ḥadīth what they understood based on the five senses and not based on divine text. For example, when someone says, "Allāh rose above His throne by His Essence or He descends to the lower sky by His Essence", he actually adds "by His Essence" to it as he understands such actions based on the (natural) laws of his surroundings and not based on Qur'ān and ḥadīths texts.

I also wonder at a man from the land of Andalusia, named Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, who authored a book titled *al-Tamhīd*, in which he commented on the ḥadīth of Allāh's descending to the lower sky, saying: "This indicates that Allāh, Most High, is above His throne because otherwise descending would have no meaning." This statement cannot be said by anyone except a person, who lacks the knowledge about Allāh, Exalted is He, because such an understanding is deduced by his senses that explains to him the mechanism of the descending of objects, upon which he used it to analogize Allāh's Attribute.

How far are some people from adhering to the transmitted texts only? Their statements are the worst of what interpreters may say, and yet ironically, they condemn the *mutakallimun* (speculative theologians).

O you, seeker of guidance! You should know that sound reasoning and divine texts established for us two profound principles through which Prophetic narrations are understood i.e. The divine text is the statement of Allāh,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ

"There is nothing like unto Him."

[*al-Shura* (42):11]

wherein He negates all possibility of understanding Allāh's Attributes based on what is necessitated and deduced by our senses.

The second principle is the sound reasoning of mankind that understands that the Creator is separate from the creation, and has concluded such a fact by realising the changes happening and effecting the creation, and so deduced, by affirmation, the eternity of the Creator.

I truly wonder at those who respond without understanding the nature of speech.

The authentic ḥadīth mentioned that death will be slaughtered in a location between Paradise and Hell?[59]

Would the intellect of mankind not interpret this incident differently to what it appears, if it was sufficed by none but its capacity, because the intellect of human beings perceive death as an event that necessitates the negation of life, thus knowing the death of death will be impossible?

If someone asked, what is the response to the fact mentioned in the ḥadīth about the death of death, the response would be: 'This is a portrait given to inform the creation about the end of death.' It could be argued, as is reported in the authentic ḥadīth that the *Surah al-Baqarah* and *Āl-'Imrān* would come on the Day of Judgment just like two clouds![60]

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[59] Bukhārī, #4730 and Muslim, #2849.

The reply would be that words cannot be a cloud or even resemble it. However, the counter-argument to this response will necessitate denying the reported text of the ḥadīth. But, the response in such a case is that, there is no denial or objection to the text. This is because the ḥadīth means that the clouds that are mentioned actually mean the reward, [however, some have suggested they are real clouds].

The question that will arise accordingly is: 'what is the evidence that made the apparent meanings of these ḥadiths be discarded?'

The answer is: 'Knowledge tells us that words cannot resemble bodies and death cannot be slaughtered like animals.'

Besides, the Arabic language, as everyone knows, is very robust, rich and very commonly expressed in this way. The would-be people of knowledge would then interfere to affirm all this and accept what has been stated as the truth.

To which I say, 'I wonder at you! You refused to ascribe to death and words what does not suit or conform to them because you wanted to maintain what you understand about their real nature and reality, yet you do not seem to negate what necessitates the resemblance between the Creator and His creation, even though evidence is established in this regard!'

Opponents insist on arguing and refusing to admit the truth until the truth prevails.

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[60] Muslim, #804.

CHAPTER FIFTY

The Compassion of Allāh towards His Slaves

I pondered the wisdom behind abrogating the text of verse of stoning the married adulterer from the Qur'ān, while affirming its ruling, as agreed on by all scholars, and I came to realise that there are two reasons; they are:

First, it is from the compassion (*lutf*) of Allāh towards His slaves that He did not face them with the greatest hardship; therefore He only mentioned the punishment of lashing and concealed the mentioning of stoning. In the same context, scholars explained that when Allāh stated the obligations which the innate nature of mankind dislikes, He would refer to it in a passive format,

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ

"decreed upon you is fasting."
[*al-Baqarah* (2):183]

though it is He Who ordained this command. On the other hand, in aspects that entail comfort, He uses the active format,

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ٱلرَّحْمَةَ

"Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy."
[*al-An'ām* (6):54]

Second, the text was abrogated to manifest the virtue of this nation for accepting the ruling after being convinced of its establishment through just a few evidences. This is because agreeing on the establishment of this ruling is evidence per se, but nevertheless is not as superior as it would have been should the evidence have been established in the text of Qur'ān.

The example of this is the acceptance of Prophet Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) to act upon the vision he received in his dream to slaughter his son, which is evidence per se, but not as strong as it would be if such a revelation was received while in an awakened state.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

The Cause and the Causer

If I experienced unpleasant conditions and so I turned, with all my heart, to Allāh, Most High, alone, all the while, knowing that none can bring forth a benefit to me and cast away harm from me except Him.

I then searched for the means in resolving my condition, which made my certainty [in Allāh] stand in objection claiming that this behaviour indicates my reliance upon Allāh is defected.

To which I said, 'this is not the case, because Allāh creates the means and the causes for a reason. In other words, it was as if the state of my condition intended to suggest that the existence of means and causes that Allāh created, equals their non-existence [i.e. if I abandon the means then it will be as if I there is no divine wisdom behind creating them].'

Notwithstanding, seeking the means is always advocated in religion; for example, Allāh said,

وَإِذَا كُنتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ
مِّنْهُم مَّعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوٓا۟ أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا۟ فَلْيَكُونُوا۟
مِن وَرَآئِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَآئِفَةٌ أُخْرَىٰ لَمْ يُصَلُّوا۟
فَلْيُصَلُّوا۟ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا۟ حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ

> "And when you [i.e., the commander of an army] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms."
>
> [*al-Nisā'* (4):102]

And

قَالَ
تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأَبًا فَمَا حَصَدتُّمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِى سُنۢبُلِهِۦٓ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا مِّمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

> "[Yūsuf] said, 'You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat..."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):47]

The Prophet (ﷺ) wore two armours [when he fought in the battle of Uhud], consulted two doctors [when he was sick], and sought the protection of Al-Mut'im Ibn 'Adī when he could not enter Makkah and after he left for Ṭa'if. Though he could enter it without seeking such means.

Therefore since religion made the outcome linked to its cause, overlooking the means and causes will dismiss the reason for which such means are created.

For this reason, I consider that seeking medical treatment is preferable, though the founder of the madhhab I follow[61] adopted the view that not seeking medical treatment is better, but knowing the evidence [contrary to his adopted view] prevented me from following his view.

It has been authentically proven that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "There is no disease that Allāh has created, except that He has also created its cure. Thus, seek medical treatment."[62]

This order indicates either obligation or encouragement and it is known that such a command was not preceded by prevention; it is thus concluded to indicate permissibility.

'Ā'ishah (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhā*) used to say, "I learned medicine from the many illnesses the Prophet (ﷺ) used to suffer and what doctors used to prescribe for him"[63]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, "Eat from this [food] for it is better for you than the other types of food."[64]

On the other hand, those who said leaving medical treatment is better relied on the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ) "Seventy thousand will enter Paradise without being brought to account; they are those who neither treated themselves with branding (cauterization) or sought *ruqyah*, or saw evil omens in things (i.e. they were not superstitious), and they put their trust only in their Lord."[65]

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[61] i.e. Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal

[62] Bukhārī, #5678 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

[63] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 6/67

[64] Tirmidhī, #2037 and Abū Dāwūd, #3756, see Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī

However, this ḥadīth does not negate the concept of seeking medical treatment because it refers to the practice of the people before who used to cauterize themselves in order to protect against sickness from occurring, and used to seek *ruqyah* in advance to protect against suffering a calamity.

We know that the Prophet (ﷺ) cauterized [Asad] Ibn Zarārah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*), and allowed the treatment of *ruqyah* as proven in the authentic ḥadīth.[66] Therefore, I came to understand that what I have mentioned is what was intended.

Should I suffer indigestion problems, my knowledge advises me to abstain from eating oak and to drink tamarind, which is a form of medical treatment. However, if I drink what may harm my health then I invoke Allāh to cure me—wisdom and sense of reason would admonish me saying, "Have you not heard the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ), 'Tie it [the camel] and then put your reliance on Allāh.'"[67]

Thus you should drink what suits your health and then ask Allāh to grant you health, and do not be like a person whose garden is separated from the river by a handful of mud that he was too lazy to remove by his hand, and then started to pray seeking Allāh to send down rain. In fact, the state of such a person is like he who travels without taking any provisions, testing his Lord to see if He will provide him provision or not during his journey, though Allāh told him in the Qur'ān,

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[65] Bukhārī, #5752 and Muslim, #220 on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhumā*)

[66] Tirmidhī, #2050 and see Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

[67] Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, #731, Tirmidhī, #2517 and see Ṣaḥiḥ al-Tirmidhi on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

وَتَزَوَّدُوا

"And take provisions."

[*al-Baqarah* (2):197]

But still insist on refusing to take provisions, which makes him ruined even before he travels.

Similarly, if the time for prayer (*salah*) commenced and he was short of water, he would be admonished for slacking and it would be said to him, 'You should have ensured having sufficient water before travelling.'

Beware of being fooled by the actions of some people who deviated from the religious commandments and wrongly assumed that perfection is achieved through opposing the norms and innate nature of humans.

Were it not for the profound knowledge, none of the above could have been explained or even been made aware of. Understand therefore, what I have mentioned for it is more beneficial for you than reading lots of texts.

Be with the people who heed the meanings of words and stay away from the longwinded speakers.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

Islām is a Religion of Hygiene (*naẓāfa*)

I noticed that many people tend to neglect their bodies; some do not floss their teeth after eating, some do not wash their hands from oil and fat.

Some rarely brush their teeth, some do not wear kohl in their eyes, some do not remove the hair of their armpits. This negligence and failing to observe personal hygiene leads to a failure in conforming to religion and life.

As for its negative effect on people's religion, the defect results because religion commands believing men to observe particular etiquettes; to bathe on Friday before attending the Friday prayer because it is a day he meets with people; not to enter the *Masjid* when having bad breath from eating garlic[68] ; to cleanse the edges of the nails and toes and cut them; to cleanse the mouth with the *siwāk*[69] to wear perfume and smell good and so forth.

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[68] Bukhārī, #852-855 and Muslim, #564 on the authority of Jābir (*raḍiy. 'llāhu 'anhu*)

[69] Bukhārī, #787 and Muslim, #252 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy. 'llāhu 'anhu*)

If these etiquettes and manners are being overlooked or neglected, a person has by this, abandoned what the religion prescribed, whereby in some cases, it may affect the validity of his acts of worship such as in the case when neglecting cleansing the dirt accumulated under his nails will prevent the water of his *wuḍū* to reach these parts, hence his wudu becomes void and so does the prayer he prayed with that *wudu.*

With respect to the negative effect of this on people's lives, I have noticed that some of those who overlook personal hygiene harm me when they get close to me to whisper a secret in my ears, while being unaware of the harm they are causing because I annoyingly have to endure the bad smell of their mouths to protect the privacy of the secret they wish to tell. Worse still, some of them notice the bad smell of their mouth yet do not even attempt to cleanse it.

The bad smell of the man also disgusts and turns off the wife who may find it too rude to mention it to him, and so causing her to give him no attention.

Ibn ʿAbbās (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhumā*) used to say, 'I like to beautify myself for my wife as much as I like my wife to beautify herself for me.'

The argument of some people, who object that this type of beautification is pretentious and unreal, is baseless and trivial because Allāh created mankind in the best stature and the eye enjoys beauty. Looking at the eyes, the eyelashes and the brows and the systematic order of body, will make one realise, with no doubt, that Allāh beautified mankind.

The personal hygiene of the Prophet (ﷺ) was of the utmost and he constantly smelled good, and so his Companions (*raḍiy-Allāhu* *'anhum*) reported that he would raise his arms until the whiteness of his armpit showed, and sometimes his leg was exposed and appeared very white and clean.

He (ﷺ) also constantly cleansed his mouth with *siwāk* and disliked to smell anything but good.

Anas Ibn Mālik (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*) related: "Even his grey hair looked very good on him."[70]

The wise mentors always said: 'Whoever washes his clothes, his worries depreciates and whosever smell is good his intellectuality increases.'

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Why do you enter upon me with yellow teeth. You should cleanse your teeth with *siwāk*."[71]

Furthermore, praying while ensuring the teeth are cleaned with the *siwāk* is deemed better than if someone prayed without doing so.[72]

The wise mentors used to say, 'Whosoever nails are long, is a miser.'

And the Prophet (ﷺ) was known for liking perfume.[73]

Besides, being clean and smelling good makes one likeable and people incline to this kind of a person. The wife will also feel comfortable when the husband is in such a state because women are the partners of men[74] and so as the man dislikes his wife to neglect herself, the wife dislikes her husband to neglect himself. And it is possible that the husband can endure what he dislikes in his wife but the wife may not be able to endure what she dislikes in him.

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[70] Bukhārī, #3550 and Muslim, #2341

[71] *Musnad* Ahmad, 1/214—on the authority of 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*). It is weak; see *Da'if al-Jami'*, #798.

[72] Musnad Ahmad, 6/272—it is weak.

[73] Abū Dāwūd and Hākim on the authority of 'A'ishah (*radiy Allahu 'anha*).

I have witnessed a group of people who claim to be ascetics (*zuhhād*) whose personal hygiene can be describe as disastrous at least, and that was because they were not disciplined by knowledge (*ʿilm*).

As for what some people reported that Dāwūd al-Ṭa'ī was advised to comb his beard, and he answered that he is too busy to comb it—this was an unexceptional case for which he is excused because he was known for being too overwhelmed by his fear of the Hereafter to look after himself, and if he was in a condition where he is conscious about his appearance, he would have done it. Thus, no one should use the actions of such a person as evidence to the contrary.

Whoever looks into the characteristics (*khaṣā'iṣ*) of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), he will realise the perfection of knowledge and actions (*kāmilan fi'l-ʿilm wa'l-ʿamal*), therefore everyone should follow his lead and example because he is the evidence (*ḥujjah*) of Allāh on mankind.

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[74] Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Aḥmad

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

The Danger of Luxury (*al-rafāhiyya*)

I reflected upon the state of the affluent, whose interests revolve around the pleasures of this worldly life and who go to lengths in protecting themselves from the elements of heat and the cold—realising that such exaggeration with protection stands against the purpose for which heat and cold were created.

And so, these people only acquire a temporal pleasure followed by pain; and there is no good in a pleasure leading to pain.

To elaborate this point, in hot weather they drink ice water that renders harm to the body, which people of medicine say causes severe diseases whose effect show as a person ages.

They also place double layered sheets on windows to cast away the sunlight; and in cold weather, they put on heavy clothing to keep their bodies warm.

This lifestyle opposes the actual wisdom behind the creation of hot and cold weather. Heat was created to break down and decompose blood, sputum, black bile and yellow bile, and cold to freeze them—while the lifestyle of these people turn their entire year into a season of spring—negating the effect of heat and cold and leading to long-term illnesses in the future.

Let none think or even assume that I advise people to expose themselves to cold or hot weather. Rather, I advise people not to overdo warming themselves in winter and cooling themselves in summer. This is because the body needs to feel some of the warmth of summer to break down the aforesaid elements in the body in a way that does not affect its stamina, and to feel some of the cold in winter without harming the body because warmth and cold are created for the benefit of the body.

There was one a prince who used to overly protect himself against the heat and cold until his health condition changed and so he died at an early age. I mentioned his full story in my other book, titled 'Selected Benefits from the Science of Medicine'.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

Patience (*ṣabr*) and Contentment (*riḍā'*)

The most difficult task Allāh ordained upon mankind is enduring (*ṣabr*) the circumstances of what has been predestined (*qaḍā'*) for them, and the best action to embrace in this regard is being content (*riḍā'*) with what Allāh predestined because endurance with patience is obligatory while being content is a prized virtue (*faḍl*).

The reason why patience is difficult is because fate often brings forth what the innate nature (*nafs*) dislikes. These disliked events are not limited to physical harm (*idhā*) or sickness (*maraḍ*), but vary in nature and type—and even extends to events that bedazzle the mind (*'aql*) due to the incapacity of the mind to understand the wisdom behind certain events.

For example, you may see the wealth of some people being beyond the imagination and to the extent they would appropriate their wealth into pots and plates, through crystal, diamonds and such precious gem stones to simply look better. This behaviour translates the negligence of such people to what the religion commands.

They heed not to the divine edicts, therefore you find them wear silk and oppress people, while the pleasures of life are still granted to them. On the other hand, you find many pious people (*ahlul-dīn*) and students of knowledge (*ṭulāb al-ʿilm*) are overwhelmed with poverty (*faqr*) and stand subdued helplessly under the decree of oppressors. Through this, *Shayṭān* finds his way to whisper (*waswās*) his evil to mankind and begins his evil plot by defaming and accusing the wisdom of fate (*ḥikmaht al-qadr*); hence believers need to have patience over the misfortunes (*balāʾ*) they come are trialled with in their lives as well as struggle patiently against the whispers of *Shayṭān.*

From the examples of which the mind stands bewildered is how the disbelievers come to overpower the Muslims and the authority sinners have over the pious. More astounding are the pain of animals and the suffering of children that comes to test the true faith of believers.

Patience over all these kinds of events can be enhanced through exploring both the religious texts (*naql*) and sensibility of the mind (*ʿaql*).

The religious texts are of two types; Qur'ān and Sunnah. The Qur'ān provides explicit explanation for two situations:

(i) reason for bestowing the disbelievers (*kuffār*) and sinners (*fāsiqūn*) with worldly pleasures; Allāh said,

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا
أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوٓا إِثْمًا ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

> "And let not those who disbelieve ever think that [because] We extend their time [of enjoyment] it is better for them. We only extend it for them so that they may increase in

sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment."

[*Āl-'Imrān* (3):178]

and

وَلَوْلَآ
أَن يَكُونَ ٱلنَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ
لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّن فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

"And if it were not that the people would become one community [of disbelievers], We would have made for those who disbelieve in the Most Merciful—for their houses—ceilings and stairways of silver upon which to mount"

[*al-Zukhruf* (43):33],

and

وَإِذَآ أَرَدْنَآ أَن نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا۟ فِيهَا
فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا ٱلْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَٰهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

"And when We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent but they defiantly disobey therein; so the word [i.e., deserved decree] comes into effect upon it, and We destroy it with [complete] destruction."

[*al-Isrā'* (17):16],

(ii) reason for testing believers (*ibtilā' al-mu'min*) in this life; Allāh said,

أَمْ
حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟
مِنكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

"Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while Allāh has not yet made evident those of you who fight in His cause and made evident those who are steadfast?"

[*Al-ʿImrān* (3):142]

and

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا
يَأْتِكُم مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ خَلَوْا۟ مِن قَبْلِكُم ۖ مَّسَّتْهُمُ ٱلْبَأْسَآءُ وَٱلضَّرَّآءُ
وَزُلْزِلُوا۟ حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ ٱلرَّسُولُ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَعَهُۥ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ ۗ
أَلَآ إِنَّ نَصْرَ ٱللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٢١٤﴾

"Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When is the help of Allāh?' Unquestionably, the help of Allāh is near."

[*al-Baqarah* (2):214]

and

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تُتْرَكُوا۟ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟
مِنكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا۟ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِۦ وَلَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَلِيجَةً ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

"Do you think that you will be left [as you are] while Allāh has not yet made evident those among you who strive [for His cause] and do not take other than Allāh, His Messenger and the believers as intimates? And Allāh is Acquainted with what you do."

[*al-Tawbah* (9):16]

The Sunnah provides exemplary indication (*ḥāl*) as well as verbal (*qawl*) explanation; the example of the former is the lifestyle of the Prophet (ﷺ) who used to change sides while laying down as he used to sleep on sand and sticks which left marks on his body.

These hard conditions made 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu*) cry and say, 'Caesar and Kisra [who are upon falsehood] indulge in silk and soft fibres [while you are upon the truth and endure such hardship].' The Prophet (ﷺ) said "O 'Umar, do you have any doubt? Are not you pleased that we enjoy [the pleasures of] the Hereafter and they enjoy the pleasures of this life?"[75]

And the example of the latter is his (ﷺ) statement "If this worldly life was worth equivalent to a wing of a fly in the sight of Allāh, He would not have let a disbeliever drink even one sip of water from it."[76]

The sensibility of the mind (i.e. intellect) supports the soldiers of patience (*ṣabr*) with its own troops, from which is that it offers the following argument; the wisdom of the One who predestined the fate holds true and factual for me based on numerous evidences, therefore, I shall not resort to what the ignorant view as a defect, nor leave the ready established principle.

The sound of reason also argues that the extravagant expenditures of the sinner, which fascinates the common people, entails a meaning of deprivation—and the deprivation of wealth afflicting the obedient implies a (benevolent) meaning of bestowing.

This is because the bestowing upon the sinner necessitates a severe punishment [in the Hereafter] whereas the deprivation of worldly pleasures leads to abundant reward [in the Hereafter for the obedient], and the lifetime of both types of people is soon to end and both will meet what awaits them.

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[75] Bukhārī, #2468 on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu*)

[76] Tirmidhiī #2320 and Ibn Mājah, #4110 on the authority of Sahl Ibn Sa'd (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu*)

Another evident argument is that the example of those believing in Allāh are like hired servants, and the time of work is as short as the daylight. Thus, he who works in mud should not wear clean clothes but rather endure the hours of work so that when he finishes his work, he cleanses himself and puts on the best of his clothes.

This is because whoever indulges in play during the time of work will receive nothing except regret at the time of payment, and punishment for his slackness.

This understanding should strengthen and solidify the knots of patience. I will elaborate further still, and so I say:

Since Allāh has predestined the acceptance of those who are martyred, He also created people whose hands would reach out to murder and cause harm to the believers. Thus we find only a disbeliever such as Abū Lu'lu' al-Majūsī would kill 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*); likewise a kharijite[77] such as Ibn Muljam would kill 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*); and a tyrant disbeliever would kill Prophet Yaḥyā Ibn Zakariyah (*'alayhi as-salām*).

If the eye of understanding (*'ayn al-fahm*) unveils the darkness around it, it would have noticed the Causer (*Musabbib*) and not the causes (*asbāb*), and the One who predestines (*muqaddir*), not the foreordained (*iqdār*), hence being able to endure His trials to favour what He wants as only then will you be content with what He ordained.

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[77] A deviated sect that declares every Muslims as disbelievers for committing sins and rebelled against the Muslim rulers

The example of this is like how some people once asked a person whose health was suffering from a difficult condition, 'Invoke Allāh to cure you', to whom he replied: 'I like my condition for Allāh likes it for me.'

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Whoever Tastes the Knowledge of his Lord Shall Savour the Taste of His Love

After I completed the preceding chapter, a call from inside my subconscious said to me, 'Save me your explanation about enduring the Divine Decree (*qadr*) for I am sufficed with what you have presented so far.

However, I would like you to describe the state of being content and pleased with the Divine Decree because I find this topic bringing forth a breeze of comfort that eases the soul.' I said, 'O you who calls, listen to the answer and understand the truth.'

Being content and pleased with what Allāh Decreed is from the fruits of knowing (*thamart al-maʿrifa*) the Lord because when you know Him you will be pleased and content (*ridā'*) with what He Decreed (*qadā'*). The bitterness of some of what He foreordained will be tasted by the contented, whereas the one who knows his Lord will experience less bitterness because the sweetness of this knowledge (*halāwa al-maʿrifa*) is too strong. And, if the knower advances in this knowledge to reach the level of love (*mahabba*), bitterness (*murʿra*) of fate transforms into sweetness (*halāwa*).

The voice within said to me, ‘Inform me about what I should be pleased and content with! Assume that I am content with Allāh predestining sickness (*marad*) and poverty (*faqr*), but should I also be content with being too indolent to serve Him, and part from those whom He loves? Kindly explain to me what comes under the category of contentment and what does not.’

I replied: ‘Indeed, this is a good question, so take heed of the difference and be attentive to it just like a person who gives ear while his mind is attentive.’

Be content with what He has Decreed! As for indolence [laziness] and carelessness, they are two actions that are attributed to you [for you have assumed them by your freewill] therefore you should not be content with these actions of yours.

Observe His due rights upon you and push yourself to embark into what will draw you nearer to Him while refusing to be too indolent to struggle to achieve this goal.

As for what He has Decreed but is beyond your capacity, you should be content with that and be as Rabī‘ah[78], (may Allāh engulf her with His mercy), when the story of a man from the worshippers who picked up his food from the trash dump was mentioned in her presence, and some people commented: ‘Why did he not ask Allāh to grant his provision from a place other than that dirty place?’ She said: ‘Being content [with what Allāh wrote for them] is not selective, and whoever tastes the knowledge [of knowing his Lord] will relish the taste of [His] love, therefore his contentment became natural and unquestionable.’

A person should, nevertheless exert effort and endeavour to seek this knowledge through evidences, then act upon this knowledge by being dedicated and devoted in worshipping Allāh in the hope of being granted His love (*maḥabba*).

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[78] A famous female pious ascetic and a worshipper

Allāh, Exalted be He, said in the divine ḥadīth (*qudsi*), "My slave will keep drawing nearer to me by performing voluntary good deeds until I love him. If I love him, I will be his hearing with which he hears and his eyesight with which he sees."[79]

Indeed, this is the ultimate affluence...and woe to me for being poor!

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[79] Bukhārī, #6502 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allahu ʿanhu*).

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Secure Your Income

I notice that most people of knowledge (*'ulamā'*) are too busy in their time of youth seeking knowledge to seek the means of provision. When they receive no financial help from the public treasury (*bayt al-māl*), and the aid they receive from friends is inadequate to cover their needs, they become in need of what cannot be overlooked in life, so they become compelled to humiliate themselves by begging others for help.

This scenario made me think of only two reasons of wisdom behind it:

- The first of which is to subdue their [potential] ego [resulting from acquiring the knowledge] with this humiliation.
- The second of which is to benefit others from the reward they will receive in return for helping them.

I then further thought deeply about it and came to notice an interesting meaning in this regard that is: a lofty person will not let this worldly life settle in his heart after witnessing its low-condition, hence he becomes more determined and striving because by then, he realises its similarity with a waste yard that dogs fight over or a toilet that only a person attends when he has to.

Consequently when death arrives to take this soul away from this world, the heart will have no attachment to it hence it becomes very easy to give up.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Scholars and Ascetics

A group of ascetics (*mutazahhidūn*) admonish and criticise many scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) or enjoying lawful luxury, and their objection is only because of their lack of knowledge (*jahl*), because had they any knowledge [of this religion] they would not be admonishing them for such behaviour.

This is because the nature of human beings is different; you may find someone who can endure living a difficult life while another cannot tolerate such a condition. It is for this reason, no one should ever demand from others to take what he finds tolerable and bearable. Nevertheless, our religion is here to serve a guideline; to control our actions, which include both, concessions (*ruqsa*) [in events of hardships] and judgements [that require patience]. That being the case, whoever operates within the guidelines of religion should be free of blame. As a matter of fact, sometimes opting for the concession can be much better than opting for endurance due to its great effect.

For this reason, if those ascetics learned that knowledge (*ʿilm*) necessitates knowing (*maʿrifa*) Allāh, and so [in such state] hearts fear Him greatly and bodies melt down because of the caution [of His punishment], they would have known that looking after the health of the bodies is required to ensure and maintain the strength.

Furthermore, as the instruments of knowledge and memorisation (*ālat-al-ʿilm wa’l-ḥifẓ*) are the heart (*qalb*) and the mind (*fakr*), when the instrument is eased then quality of work improves. This information cannot be obtained except by knowledge. However the ignorance (*jahl*) of (these ascetics) about religion and their lack of knowledge caused them to object to what they did not know. They assumed that the purpose [of creating their bodies] is to exhaust the bodies while, in fact, they are unaware that even excessive fearing [that causes the wear and tear of the body] requires a break to survive, as someone said; ‘ease the hearts so they can understand the remembrance of Allāh (*dhikr*).’

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

The Concealed Traps of *Shaytān*

Knowledge (*'ilm*) is indeed the ultimate honour (*ashrāf*) in this universe, and how could it not be when it is the evidence [on the existence of its Creator] without which a person goes astray.

From the concealed traps of the *Shaytān* is when he beautifies for a person the act of worshipping, just to distract him from the best of worship, which is attaining knowledge.

Falling for this trap made some people from previous eras bury their books [of knowledge] and threw them in the sea. This behaviour was reported from some of the pious people but, giving them the benefit of the doubt and assuming goodness in them, I interpreted their action to mean that they did so because their books included some of their own opinions that they did not wish to spread among people. Otherwise, should these books contain correct and beneficial knowledge not feared to cause bad consequences; it would be regarded as waste of money (and time) which is unlawful to do.

This devilish trap worked on some of the Ṣūfiyah to the point they forbade their students to carry the ink [used to write knowledge].

Jaʿfar al-Khuldī said, 'If Ṣūfī people had not restrained me, I would have narrated for you the numerous chains of narrations. I was writing down the knowledge given by Abū'l-'Abbās al-Durī when a Ṣūfī met me and said to me: 'Leave the knowledge of papers and seek the knowledge of worn garments.'

And once, a Ṣūfī was seen carrying ink, so another Ṣūfī said to him: 'Cover your *'awrah* [i.e. he considered seeking knowledge as a shameful act].'

Evidently, this is from the hidden tricks of the *Shayṭān*,

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُۥ فَٱتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا
فَرِيقًا مِّنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

> "And *Iblīs* had already confirmed through them his assumption, so they followed him, except for a party of Believers."
>
> [*al-Sabā'*(34):20]

The reasons for which *Iblīs* decorated this deviation (of abstaining from seeking knowledge) are because he wants to achieve two goals:

(1) Lead people astray so they walk in the dark
(2) Keeping them away from knowledge because acquiring more knowledge and exploring the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions every day will reveal to them the unknown, strengthen their belief, solidify their knowledge in Allāh, and show them the mistakes of their actions.

For these reasons, *Iblīs* wants to block these ways by his most hidden trap, so he made them believe that the main purpose is the acts of worship per se, and not knowledge (that brings meaning and strength to worship). Those deceived did not know that attaining knowledge itself is an act of worship, and the best act of worship at that [as it is the source whereby they learn what and how to worship].

Having said that, beware of this concealed trick for knowledge is the ultimate light and the greatest principle. Verily, flipping the pages [of religious books] can sometimes be better than [optional] fasting, prayer, *ḥajj* and *jihād.*

There are many who overlooked seeking knowledge. As a consequence suffered the torture of his desires (*hawā*) while worshipping the Lord, and overlooked the obligatory because of his focus on the optional (*nāfil*). He busied himself with what he deemed the best but forgetting the obligatory (*wājib*).

Had they a spark from the light of knowledge (*nūr al-ʿilm*) they would have been guided. So contemplate on what I have mentioned and you shall be safe, by the will of Allāh.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

Strengthening the Self *(taqwiya al-nafs)*

Two individuals passed by me carrying a heavy trunk while entertaining themselves with chanting all the way. One would sing and the other would listen to him, and in return, he would repeat it or sing something else and so forth.

After thinking about what they did, I realised that if they did not behave in way they did, then carrying the heavy trunk would have been more difficult and so what they did brought them some ease along the way.

Having contemplated the effect of that made me understand that each one of them gave his attention to what the other person was saying while focusing on what he will say afterwards—thereby making each one of them overlook the heaviness of what they were carrying.

This made me astonishingly conclude that as mankind is ordained to fulfil difficult tasks—and amongst these tasks is to wisely cope with the *'self'* (*nafs*) [to make it abide by the law], compel it to overlook what it desires patiently and perform what it dislikes patiently—the right thing to do in such circumstances is to walk on the road of patience to the end while ensuring the self is being entertained and dealt with gently.

An example of this meaning is reported from the life of Bishr al-Hāfi, may Allāh engulf him with His mercy, who once travelled with another man and this man became thirsty on the way. As they arrived at a well, he said to Bishr, 'Let's drink from this well' but Bishr replied, 'Be patient and we will drink from the other well on the way.' When they reached the other well, Bishr again encouraged the man advising him to be patient until they reached the next well and he kept doing so all the way. Then, at the end, Bishr said to the man, 'See, this is how this life should be passed.'

Whoever understands this principle will entertain, encourage and handle the *'self'* (*nafs*) gently with good promises about what awaits it in order to patiently conform to the commandments ordained on it. This meaning was reported from the righteous predecessors (*salaf*); one of them used to say to his *'self'*, 'By Allāh, the only reason I forbid you from what you desire is my compassion for you.'

And, Abū Yazīd used to say, 'I remained steering my *'self'* to Allāh while it cried, until I could eventually steer it to Allāh while laughing.'

Know that handling the *'self'* gently (*talaṭṭaf*) is required because it will help you endure and overcome the difficulties of this life. The aforementioned is merely a hint for its elaboration will become lengthy.

CHAPTER SIXTY

Fake Not Your Sermons

I gave a deep thought over some events taking place during the assemblies of preaching and sermons (*majālis al-wa‘iẓ*), which laypeople (*‘awām*) and the ignorant ones (*juhhāl*) among the learned believe to be acts that draw a person near to Allāh.

While in fact, such acts are rejected in religion and keep one far from Allāh. Examples of these acts are what the Qur’ān reciters do when they recite the Qur’ān in a tone similar to singing (*ghinā’*), and the preacher chants poetry (*ash‘ār*) of the madman of Layla causing some to clap their hands and some to tear apart their clothes assuming what they do is something that draws them closer to Allāh!

It is known however that these tones work like music causing the *‘self’* (*nafs*) to be in a state of beatitude and the mood to reach ecstasy, therefore exposing the *‘self’* to what brings forth corruption and evil is a great mistake. Hence, people of authority should monitor the assemblies and sermons of preachers [to prevent them from embracing or advocating such practices], and, particularly, those who you find amongst them in cemeteries where they [recite the Qur’ān for money] as they provoke sadness and grief in people; so women weep more and in return, they get paid more.

They do so because if they commanded women to be patient (*bi'l-ṣabr*) that would be something not of their liking, and so they would rather opt to be paid. All these practices stand against the teachings of Islām.

Ibn ʿAqil said: 'I attended a gathering to console a man whose child deceased. The Qur'ān reciter recited there,

يَٰأَسَفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ

"Oh, my sorrow over Yūsuf."

[*Yūsuf* (12): 84]

so I said to him, 'This is nothing but a form of moaning over the deceased using the Qur'ān, which is not permitted!'

Some preachers would talk about knowing and loving Allāh, making tailors and the common people who do not even know the pillars of prayer (*ṣalah*), tear off their clothes claiming such an act means they love Allāh, Most High.

The best of the worse amongst them is he whose hallucination makes him imagine seeing someone whom he assumes is the Creator, therefore his longing (*shawq*) for Him after hearing about His Greatness (*ʿaẓma*), Mercy (*raḥma*) and Beauty (*jamāl*) drives him to cry and weep, while, in fact, what they imagine and hallucinate is definitely not the worshipped [Allāh] because He cannot be imagined by any mind (*khiyāl*).

In addition to all that, dealing with the common laypeople is difficult (*ṣaʿb*) as they hardly benefit from the bitterness of the truth (*murr al-ḥaqq*). The preacher is ordered not to exceed the limits of what is deemed correct in religion, and not to expose the audience to what may corrupt them. Rather, he should seek the most suitable means to attract them to what benefits them and rectifies their affairs in the best manner, which is an art that requires skill because some laypeople are touched by the eloquent speech, while others are touched by the metaphoric and indicative type of speech, and yet others are touched by the effect of poetry (*sh'ir*).

The most in need for the eloquence of speech is the preacher in order to meet the needs of all types of people he encounters. Yet he still needs to address the necessary required knowledge and to preach to the laypeople about the permissible things that will suffice them, just as a person adds salt to the food—to attract them to [overlook concessions and] opt for acts of worship that takes patience (*ṣabr*), effort and to show them the true path.

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal attended the sitting of Al-Ḥārith Al-Muhāsabī and the words of the latter made him cry. He then said, 'I dislike [for people] to attend this sitting.'[80] He however cried because the words said necessitated the eyes to shed the tears.

A group of the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) noticed that storytellers (*quṣṣas*) only focused on narrating stories that soften the hearts and so used to prevent people from attending their gatherings.

However, given the circumstances and condition of laypeople today, to prevent them from attending these gatherings is not right because people in that era were preoccupied with learning knowledge and so they considered these kind of gatherings (of story tellers) would distract people from learning the knowledge of their religion. Since most people today do not seek knowledge (*'ilm*). Sermons and gatherings of such preaching are the best thing to benefit laypeople as this will help them avoid sins (*dhi'b*). It will encourage them to repent (*tawbah*) and turn to Allāh.

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[80] Al-Subkī explained that the reason why Imām Aḥmad disliked people to attend the gatherings of al-Ḥarith is because what al-Ḥārith said and advocated was something that not all people can bear or handle. So, he feared for the people and not that he had something against it. However, Ibn Al-Jawzī, as it shows in this book, seems to believe that Imām Aḥmad objected to what and how Al-Ḥārith preached. And Allāh knows best!

It is not entirely the fault of laypeople because shortcoming in all this lies with the preacher who should fear Allāh in what he preaches.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Beware of Philosophical Theologians

The most dangerous and harmful things effecting the laypeople is the words of those who interpret (the texts wrongly) and those who negate Allāh's Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) He mentioned for Himself. This is because the Prophets (ﷺ) focused on establishing and affirming (*ithbāt*) the Attributes of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) in order to affirm the existence (*wujūd*) of Allāh in the hearts of laypeople since the innate nature of mankind is acquainted with affirming the existence. Thus, when laypeople are first exposed to what negates all that, it will dismiss the affirmation from their hearts and cause them a greater harm. Those scholars whom laypeople claim to exalt Allāh from defects, in reality are opposing and negating (*nafi*) the affirmation advocated by the Prophets (*'alayhum as-salām*).

To explain the aforementioned point further, Allāh, Most High, mentioned that He is above (*istawā*) His Throne—this is a cause for people to affirm (*ithbāt*) the existence (*wujūd*) of Allāh; He said,

وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ

"And there will remain the Face of your Lord."
[*al-Raḥmān* (55):27]

and

بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ

"Rather, both His hands are extended."
[*al-Mā'idah* (5):64]

and

غَضِبَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ

"and Allāh has become angry with them."
[*al-Fatḥ* (48):6]

and

رَّضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ

"Allāh is pleased with them..."
[*al-Bayyinah* (98):8]

He also informed the Prophet (ﷺ) that He descends to the lower sky,[81] that the hearts of His servants are in between His two fingers,[82] that He wrote the Torah with His Hand,[83] and wrote a Book He placed near Him over the throne.[84] When common people and the child hears all these evidences affirming [the Creator through His lofty Attributes and all that He affirms for Himself] and acquaint themselves with these Attributes and descriptions based on their human senses (*ḥass*), they are told,

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[81] Bukhārī, #1145 and Muslim, #758 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

[82] Muslim, #2654 on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhumā*).

[83] Bukhārī, #6614 and Muslim, #2652 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

[84] Bukhārī, #3194 and Muslim, #2751 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ

"There is nothing like unto Him."
[*al-Shūra* (42):11]

which erases from their hearts all that their imagination scripted in their hearts and minds keep the affirmative statements established alone.[85] That is why the legislator [i.e. the Prophet (ﷺ)] laughed when he heard someone chanting some lines of poetry, one of which was, "and the Lord of all Worlds is on His Throne."[86] And someone else asked him, "Does our Lord laugh?" And he (ﷺ) replied, "Yes He does."[87] And he (ﷺ) said: "He is on His Throne like this [i.e. describing it with his hands]."[88] All this is so he (the Prophet) establishes the existence of these Attributes and affirms them in the heart.

However, as most humans only know of the existence of a matter through their senses and experience of what they witness, this should be accepted from them until they understand the *tanẓīh* [i.e. exalting Allāh from having defects or similarities with His creation]. But if a layperson whose heart has not yet established the affirmation [of

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[85] The author means that Allāh addresses us by what we know from our world and so the Prophet (ﷺ) relays to us all that to acquaint people with these facts that they understand based on their senses and human experience. Then, after these meanings are established and rooted in the heart He brings them what removes the human imagination related to these attributes while leaving the attributes established alone in the heart.

[86] See *Al Isti'āb* of Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, 2/296—the authenticity of this report is disputed over. And, Allāh knows best.

[87] Ibn Mājah, #181, Aḥmad, 4/11-12-13, —It is weak.

[88] Abū Dāwūd, #4726—It is weak.

Allāh's Existence and Attributes] is approached and it is said to him that; "Allāh is neither above heaven nor on His Throne, it cannot be said that He has a Hand, His speech is an Attribute of His Essence, there are no similarities between His Attributes and what we have. His descent [to the lower sky] cannot be imagined, this will remove the glorification of the Qur'ān from his heart and at the same time cause his heart not to establish the affirmation of the existence of Allāh.

This is, without a doubt, a crime against the Prophets (ﷺ) that nullifies the work they spent their lives on explaining to the people. Therefore, no scholar is allowed to approach the creed of a layperson whose heart is acquainted with affirming Allāh and His Attributes because that will corrupt it and make it difficult to rectify.

As for scholars, we do not mind indulging in these details because we are assured they know the possibility that Allāh's Attributes renew, or that He rose over the throne similar to the human manner, or that He is carried by something or even described as being attached or touched or that He moves from one place to another.

The learned will also know that the meaning of flipping the hearts between two fingers means having control over the hearts because having something between two fingers indicates the absolute control over it.

And so this statement does not even require the interpreting of those who says fingers here are used to mean the good effect because, in all cases, the hearts are in between two Lordly effects; the maintaining and shifting.

Nor do we need to have the interpretation of those who said His Hands mean Grace because if one understands that the purpose is to affirm an attribute and that He addressed us with what we know from this created world and that the examples were given according to what we know while we know with certainty that it is impossible for Him to have what our senses know, we would know the purpose for mentioning all that.

The best approach is to advise the laypeople to take all that as is without indulging into interpretation and that is to ensure the safety of affirmation in their hearts, which is what the righteous predecessors intended. Imām Aḥmad forbade people to either say; "My utterance of the Qur'ān is created" or "My utterance of the Qur'ān is uncreated" because he wanted to assure the adherence of people [to the approach and method of the best generations] and keep the words of affirmation established as they are.

The most ignorant is he who weakens in the hearts of people what the Prophet (ﷺ) intended for people to glorify. When the Prophet said, "Do not travel to the land of the enemy while carrying the Qur'ān"[89], he was referring to the book inside which the Qur'ān is written.

Imām al-Shāfi'ī forbade the Muslim who is in the state of impurity to carry it even with a hook to maintain the glorification of the Qur'ān. Thus, when a person who indulges in philosophy comes and says, "The speech is an Attribute of His Essence," he is actually informing people that there is nothing in the book to respect and glorify, which stands against what the religion intended.

For this reason, it is vital to understand the context and purpose of religion as well as the intended meanings of Prophets (*'alayhi as-salām*) who forbade people to dig into what religion concealed; therefore the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade people to discuss Divine Decree (*al-Qadr*)[90] and forbade people to differ [on reciting the Qur'ān][91] because such topics lead to harmful results. This is because the one who investigates Divine Decree, his limited mind will come to a point of either saying 'Allāh punishes for what He already Decreed', thus shaking his belief as he will think this contravenes justice, or saying, 'He did not Decree' and so his faith and belief about Allāh's Power and Control will become shaky. For all these reasons, it was ordained for them to avoid indulging into these topics.

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[89] Bukhārī, #2990 and Muslim, #1869 on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhumā*).

If someone argues; 'you forbid us to know the facts and reality of things and simply order us to take no sides and to blindly follow (*taqlid*)!'

I respond, 'Not at all. I only inform you what religion ordains you to believe in it as a whole and not to investigate the details of (some of) it, searching for its true essence, though you know your limited human power makes you incapable of comprehending these details.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salam*) asked his Lord to show him how He brings the dead to life,

رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ

"My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead."
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 260]

So He showed him the dead becoming alive and did not show him how He brought the dead into life because his power and capacity are limited to comprehend it.

Let alone the Prophet (ﷺ) who was sent to clarify to people what

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[90] Tabarānī, #10488, Abū Nu'aym in *al-Ḥilyah*, 4/108. Ḥāfiẓ al-'Irāqī in Takhrīj al-*Iḥya'*, 1/50 said its isnād is ḥasan.

[91] Bukhārī, #5062 on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (*radiy. Allahu 'anhu*).

Allāh revealed and accepted that people submit and believe in it as a whole.

This was also the way of the Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) who never talked or discussed or investigated the difference between the recited Qur'ān and recitation of Qur'ān, or reading the Qur'ān and the readable—nor did they even say that *Isitiwā* means to conquer (*istawla*), or that descending means bestowing mercy! Rather, they were content and convinced with all statements that affirmed glorification in the hearts and leashed the hand of their imagination with the verse,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ

"There is nothing like unto Him."

[*al-Shūra* (42):11]

The two Angels; Munkar and Nakīr further ask each person in his grave about the general principles of, "Who is your Lord? What is your religion? And who is your Prophet?"

Whoever understands this chapter will be saved from the likening of what anthropomorphism (*tashbīh al-mujassima*) advocates and the negation of deniers (*taʿṭīl al-muʿaṭṭala*), and has positioned himself on the road of the first generation (*salaf*), with Allāh lies all the success.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

How Allāh Takes Away People's Hearing (*sam‘*) and Sight (*baṣr*)

I read the verse, that says,

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ ٱللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَـٰرَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُم
مَّنْ إِلَـٰهٌ غَيْرُ ٱللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ ۗ ٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ ٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ
ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

> "Say, 'Have you considered: if Allāh should take away your hearing and your sight and set a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than Allāh could bring them [back] to you?' Look how We diversify the verses; then they [still] turn away."
>
> [*al-An‘ām* (6):46]

and an interesting meaning sparked into my heart that blew me away, which is: if the verse meant with seeing (*baṣr*) and hearing (*sami‘*) being two instruments, then we know that hearing is a faculty to realise the hear-able and seeing is a faculty to realise the see-able. Both of which deliver their perceptions and images into the heart (*qalb*) to review and reflect.

When these two faculties perceive the creation, they inform the heart that this creation is evidence of the existence of the Creator; and hence they drive the heart to obey Him and fear Him when it disobeys His commands.[92]

But, if the verse meant with seeing and hearing the actual seeing and hearing, then the verse would mean that both will fail to notice the purpose of what they realised because of their full engagement with the whims and desires (*hawa*). Therefore a person will then be punished by having these two faculties become dysfunctional and not serve their purpose.

Thus, a person sees but does not comprehend what he sees. Hears but does not understand what he hears, and the heart fails to notice that which harms it and becomes unaware of the purpose of its creation. Hence a person becomes untouched by the fact that he will perish and not benefit from the sermons he hears, nor knows where he stands in this world, nor for what purpose he was created, nor where he will be carried. Rather, he heeds with his inherent aptitude of his needs to the immediate benefits and does not think of the loss of his Hereafter—and so he does not reflect on his companions or learn from his friends and does not acquire a provision to survive the journey [in the Hereafter].

This is the case of most people; I seek refuge with Allāh from being deprived of the benefits (*fawa'id*) of our bodily instruments for it is indeed the worst of all cases.

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[92] The verse would mean based on this explanation that Allāh takes away the faculties of seeing and hearing with which a person can find the signs leading to Him.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Divine Love (*'ishq al-Ilahi*)

I looked into what wise mentors have said about (unruly) love (*'ishq*), its causes and its cure. So I composed a book and named it 'The Dispraise of Desire (*Dham al-Hawa*)' wherein I mentioned statements that describe this type of love occurring because of an aimless enticement of an empty heart.

However, they disputed over whom this effect befalls; some of them stated that it only happens to appealing characters, and others said it happens to those whose hearts are negligent (*ghāfil* Hence distracted from reflecting on the real essence of everything.

An interesting thought however basked in my mind, which I would like to explain below:

This type of love (*'ishq*) can only overpower those whose endeavours are lowly or in vain. Because those of high endeavours—when they are about to fall into what necessitates their attachment and love (*mahabbah*) to a matter—they notice its shortcomings. Either after thinking about it or as a result of having a firsthand experience due to an interaction with what is to be loved, they thus detach their hearts from it, avoid falling in it and search for another better alternative.

Indeed, only those whose endeavours are minimal will fail to notice the shortcomings of such a type of love and hence will hold fast to the images he sees.

As for those who keep themselves above lousy acts and blemishes, they constantly rise in rank and nothing can stand in their ways. Should their innate nature (*nafs*) be inclined to love someone, their love never becomes overwhelming and unruly but rather, in the worst case, they may fall in love badly at the beginning because of the lack of contemplation (*taffakur*) (about the shortcomings of whom they love) or their lack of knowledge (*jahl*) about the defects of the one they love as they have not interacted with it frequently, or because the lover and the loved happen to have something in common such as the smart one meets his equal or the cute one meets his equal; as this leads to creating love in the heart. As for undisciplined love, it can never find its way to them because the camels of their innate nature follow the chants of their intellect, and as the nature of humans is attached to, and eager for what does not exist in this worldly life. That is perfection not to be found in people, therefore as soon as the defects and shortcomings are noticed it detaches from what it liked and loved before.

On the other hand, the love and attachment that hearts have for the Creator is enough reason to keep the hearts wanting to add someone else besides Him.

Although this type of love a person has for his Creator is different to the type of love a person may have for another, those who acquired the knowledge of their Lord are overwhelmed by their love and too busy loving their Lord to love someone else, causing their nature to be indulged due to the strong effect of the knowledge the heart has acquired.

It was related that once a poor ascetic passed by a woman whom had his attention, so he approached her father and asked for her hand in marriage upon which the father agreed and invited the man to his house and gave him better clothes to wear.

As soon as the night arrived [i.e. the time for his night worship], the poor man started crying and saying, 'Where are my clothes? Where are my clothes? I no longer can feel what I used to feel [before I indulged into these worldly pleasures].' This change was noted by this poor man and so he realised the change was of the state of his heart (in deviating from the supreme higher state he used to enjoy).

This lofty state is exclusive to those whose knowledge of their Lord is ultimate and who rise above anything that is deemed low or imperfect.

Ibn Mas'ūd (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said: 'When a person is tempted by a woman, let him think of her urination [to dismiss such a temptation from his heart].'

This is because the mind (*'aql*) becomes heedless to the defects of a matter and its example is like that of a person enjoying the taste of food, his mind overlooks the unsightly scene when food is being chewed in the mouth and swallowed.

Similarly, when a person engages in sexual intercourse, his mind never thinks of the filth he is exposed to due to the influence of his lust (*ghalaba al-shahwa*). The same way a person is apt not to think of the fact that his own saliva is not a food yet he still swallows it. All this happen because the absence of such notions from the mind is to serve a good purpose.

However, the awakened minds (that are self-observant with high endeavours) are aware of such feelings and events without even looking for it, causing their comfortable life to be disturbed and raise them above the degradation of self-desire (*hawā*).

However much a person considers the consequences, the effect of love increases or decreases in the heart towards the loved accordingly, and as per the level of awakening a person has the severity of worries shall there be.

To recapitulate all of what I have intended to explain; the nature of people with an awakened mind (who do not overlook the negative consequences of actions) is in constant elevation causing them not to attach wholly to a person despite all of his or her good qualities.

This continuous elevation happens as a result of thinking of the defects and shortcomings of the likeable, or because of being too busy seeking what is more important and better so that one does not become attached. This is why the hearts of the ones who know their Lord are better equipped to rise to their Lord, and so they reflect.

As for the heedless persons, their rigidness and inadvertence in both situations, necessitates them being captive [to their desires] and always confused and inadequate.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

The Supplication of the Heedless

I found myself in a situation that prompted me to invoke Allāh, Most High, and ask of Him. As I began invoking Him, one of the righteous people around me joined me and started to invoke Allāh too.

This made me notice some signs indicating the supplication was answered. However, my '*self*' said to me, 'the supplication was answered because of the supplication of that person and not because of your supplication.' I replied, 'though I am aware of my sins, flaws and lack of effort that prevents my supplications from being answered, it is possible however, it was my supplication that was answered.

This is because the righteous who invoked Allāh with me though may be free of the defects and sins that I have, could have invoked with a pride for his status, whereas I invoked Allāh with humility because of my sins, possibly causing my supplication to be answered.

Perhaps admitting one's inadequacy of fulfilling his duties towards Allāh is more effective to have one's supplication answered. Not to mention, we both seek Allāh's bounties not by our deeds, therefore when I stand in humility admitting my sins I ask Allāh to grant me, by His grace, as there is nothing I did for which my supplication can be answered.

On the other hand, another person (of righteousness) may invoke while he is relying on his good deeds causing his supplication to be unanswered. 'O my own self, do not break me more for it is enough that my Lord knows of my shame'.

Besides, the knowledge I possess is enough to make me disciplined enough and admit my shortcomings and dire need for what I ask for; my certainty of the generosity of the One I ask from.

These are things the righteous person may not have, may Allāh bless his worship, and hence perhaps my admitting of my shortcomings was more effective.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Knowledge is Taught to Those Who Deserve it

I conveyed some in-depth knowledge (*'ilm*) and astute observations to a person who claims to be from the people of knowledge. I found him to be apathetic towards hearing it, and unable to understand the depth of its meaning; so not eager at all to hear what was to follow, therefore I lost interest in informing him of such knowledge. I said to myself, 'this knowledge is good (and beneficial) for a person who awaits for it just as a thirsty man awaits water'.

This event made me realise that if such a person managed to understand what I had delivered and showed appreciation for the efforts I put into teaching him, I would have respected him more and become encouraged to disclose to him the best of what I have. However, as I realised he does not deserve receiving the knowledge I teach, I did not offer him that knowledge and neglected him.

This realisation enlightened me to understand that Allāh categorised and classified the creation in the best manner. He then presented them to the intellectual people; upon each one's own understanding, Allāh will love them.

The Qur'ān includes astonishing wisdoms and gems that whoever investigates using his arm of intellect (*dhin*) and reflects upon it thoughtfully, will be drawn near to and favoured by the One who revealed it.

On the other hand, those whose minds indulge deeply into the tangible, they will not be granted the privilege of such a high rank. Allāh, Most High, said,

> سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ
> فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ
>
> "I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right."
>
> [*al-A'raf* (7):146]

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

High Endeavours (*himma al-ʿāliya*)

I supplicated to my Lord, 'O Allāh, let me achieve what I hope from knowledge (*ʿilm*), good deeds (*ʿamal*), and extend my lifetime to accomplish what I love from all that.'

However, the whispers of *Iblīs* obstructed me saying to me, 'Then what? Shall not death (*mawt*) eventually strike you? What is the benefit of a long life when death is its end?'

I responded to these devilish suggestions, 'O foolish one, if you were able to understand what was beyond the words of my supplication you would have realised that what I ask for is not trivial. Do you not see that with every day I live, my knowledge increases and that make me plant more seeds (of good deeds); hence on the Day I reap my harvest [of deeds] it will be pleasing to me. Would I be pleased if I passed away twenty years ago? By Allāh not at all.'

This is because twenty years ago I did not acquire as much knowledge as I have now about my Lord.

All this is the fruit of life (*thamara al-ḥayā'*) through which I acquired the evidences of His unique and Oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) and raised above the base of *taqlīd* to land upon gardens of insightfulness and enlightenment; acquainting with more knowledge by which my status became elevated and my own self became more precious.

In addition to my plants in the Hereafter having increased and my trade proven more successful while dealing with learners (of knowledge) interested in my merchandise [i.e. knowledge]. Allāh advised the Master of Messengers,

قُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

"Say, O Lord, increase my knowledge."
[*Ṭahā* (20):114]

Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The life of a believer is not prolonged but for goodness (*khayr*)."[93]

Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) related the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saying, "It is from good fortune (*sa'ādah*) that the lifetime of servitude [of Allāh] is prolonged and then Allāh grants him the opportunity to return to Him [in repentance] (*inābah*)."[94]

Verily, I wish that I could have the lifetime of [Prophet] Nūḥ (*'alayhi as-salām*), for knowledge is numerous, the more I acquire the more I benefit and rise.

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[93] Muslim, #2682

[94] *Mūsnad* Aḥmad, 3/332, Ḥākim, 4/240, he said it is ṣaḥīḥ and Imām Dhahabi agreed with him, and Al-Hathamī said in *al-Majma'*, 10/206, its isnād is ḥasan.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

Be Attached to the Causer and not the Causes

The hearts of those who know Allāh are fearful of being effected by, or attached to the causes of events. Though such hearts do not feel settled with the causes and means because when they are focused on investigating the causes and means. Allāh looked after and handled their affairs; hence, Allāh removes the effect of causes from their hearts, lest their hearts be being taken over.

The example of this is the situation of Muslims in the battle of Hunayn; Allāh said,

وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ
عَنكُمْ شَيْـًٔا

> "and [even] on the day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all."
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (9):25]

And, heed to the condition of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) and his concern over his son, Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), thus when he said to his sons after they asked him to take him with them,

وَأَخَافُ أَن يَأْكُلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ

"I fear that a wolf would eat him."

[*Yūsuf* (12):13]

the answer to his concern came,

فَأَكَلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ

"A wolf ate him."

[*Yūsuf* (12):17]

However, when the moment of ease came, Yahudha, son of Ya'qūb, travelled to his father carrying the shirt of Yūsuf but the wind was faster and carried the smell of Yūsuf to his father, so Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) said,

إِنِّى لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ

"Indeed, I find the smell of Yūsuf."

[*Yūsuf* (12): 94]

The same happened to Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) when he thought of the causes, and said to his inmate when he realised he was leaving prison,

ٱذْكُرْنِى عِندَ رَبِّكَ

"Mention me before your master."

[*Yūsuf* (12):42]

Thus, Allāh punished him by leaving him in prison for seven years. All this happened even though Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) was certain that freedom from prison cannot be except by the permission of Allāh and that taking the means to achieve one's goals is prescribed, but his inclination to the causes affected his condition.

This is also noted in the story of Maryam (*‘alayha as-salām*),

وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّاۖ

> “and Zakariyyah received her under his care.”
> [*Al-‘Imrān* (3):37]

But the One who created the causes (i.e. Allāh) refused to leave her for the causes and so,

كُلَّمَا
دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا ٱلْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِندَهَا رِزْقًاۖ

> “Every time Zakariyyah entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision.”
> [*Al-‘Imrān* (3):37]

It is allegedly reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said “Allāh insists to provide His believing servant from ways he does not expect”[95]

Causes of events (*asbāb tariq*) are like a road one cannot help but take; a person who knows his Lord well will never rely on it. Allāh exposes for him what He does not show others—that none should ever rely on the means and causes. Thus if he inclines to them, Allāh may punish him even though his inclination is something he does not accept. The least mistake however still deserves to be disciplined.

It is worthy to reflect on the story of Prophet Sulaymān (*‘alayhi as-salām*) who said: “Tonight, I shall sleep with one hundred women, each of whom will conceive a child” but as he did not add to it “with Allāh’s permission”, only one woman of the one hundred became pregnant who later delivered a half-child.”[96]

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[95] *Al-Tamhid* of Ibn ‘Abdu’l-Barr, 21/20—very weak.

[96] Bukhārī, #2819 and Muslim, #1654 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiy-Allahu ‘anhu*).

I was once in a situation that made me rely on some material-causes and such attachment necessitated I meet and play along with one of the oppressors to avert his harm. While I was in that condition contemplating, a Qur'ān reciter entered the room and began reciting what brought hope and comfort to my heart; he recited, in the meaning of the verse:

> وَلَا تَرْكَنُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا۟
> فَتَمَسَّكُمُ ٱلنَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَآءَ ثُمَّ
> لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

> "And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allāh any protectors; then you would not be helped."
> [*Hūd* (11):113]

This verse awakened my mind and refuted my inner thought [that which made me think of the causes and not the One who created causes]. Thus, I said to my *'self'*, "Listen, I sought victory in my attempts to play along but the Qur'ān informed that if I incline towards those who do wrong, I will not be helped or become victorious.

Thus, glad tidings are for those who are aware of the One who created causes and hence relied only on Him, for it is the ultimate purpose that we ask Allāh alone.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

The Believer and Sins

A believer does not indulge in sins (deliberately and willingly) otherwise his whims (*hawā*) and self-desires (*shahwā*) become stronger and the flames of lust erupt, causing him to fall badly. Nor does he consciously decide to commit sins, nor has the intention to repeat his sins afterwards, nor is he interested in seeking revenge (*intiqām*) when he is angry (*ghadab*). He is also determined to repent (*tawbah*) prior to committing his sins.

The best example to reflect upon is the case of the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) who decided to repent before executing their plot against him and try to rid of him—thus they said, as stated in the verses, in their meaning,

اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ

"Kill Yūsuf."

[*Yūsuf* (12):9]

Then they became more loathly suggesting,

أَوِ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا

> "or cast him away [to another land]."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):9]

while accompanying their plot with the predetermined intention to repent afterward, said,

> وَتَكُونُوا۟ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ قَوْمًا صَٰلِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾
>
> "and you will be after that a righteous people."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):9]

After they managed to take him with them to the desert and were about to kill him, due to the effect of envy in their hearts, the eldest brother suggested,

> لَا تَقْتُلُوا۟ يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِى غَيَٰبَتِ ٱلْجُبِّ
>
> "Do not kill Yūsuf but throw him into the bottom of the well."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):10]

as he wished him to stay alive and be picked up by passing a caravan in that area, thus everyone complied with his idea.

This change [intending to kill him then suggesting to cast him away but then deciding to keep him alive so someone else would pick him up and look after him] is explainable because suppressing self-desires depends on the strength of faith (*imān*).

Thus sometimes it succeeds in overpowering evil desires when intended but in some cases it is feeble at the beginning but manages to avert such evil desires when they are determined, or even avert the evil deed partially.

However, when inadvertency dominates and sin is committed, the innate desires become torpid [lacking vitality and energy to provoke] causing the resurrection of *imān* to encourage the doer to perform good deeds, and let the grievance of regret and remorse multiply by the joy reached from the committed sin.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

The Knowledge of the Arrogant

The best of all things is to further acquiring knowledge (*'ilm*) because he who happens to be content with the knowledge he has acquired and assumes it is enough, is with a doubt, a self-centred person whose views are arrogant resulting in his high opinion of himself.

He therefore becomes an obstacle averting himsel from receiving any further benefit. It can also happen that a person has a discourse where his mistakes are evident, but will never be corrected because people fear to do so as they hold him in high esteem. However, if he was humble enough to accept taking benefit (*istifāda*) from others and learning, people would have alerted him of his mistakes leading him to correct himself.

Ibn 'Aqil narrated that Abū'l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī once said: 'The knowledge of Allāh is general and not specific (i.e. He does not know or convey the details of events and things),' which is a statement this poor man made. I do not know what kind of a doubt (*shubha*) was casted in his heart confusing him to make such a terrible statement.

The same can be said when Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazali said: '[Allāh's] descending means relocating and that [Allāh's] *istiwā* means touching [the throne].'

How could I ascribe understanding (*fiqh*) or asceticism (*zuhd*) to either of them, when neither of them knows what can be or cannot be ascribed to Allāh?

But, if either were humble enough to overlook their great status, even the novice would have refuted them and thus they would have realised their mistakes.

The same happened with Abū Bakr Ibn Miqsam who authored a book titled *Al-Ihtijāj* in the field of diverse Qur'ān recitations (*qirā'*) and included in it good gems, but he corrupted his knowledge in this book when he approved odd recitations that are not supported by traditional reports, and worse still, he allowed reciting that changed the meaning of the verses. For example, he misinterpreted the verse,

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْـَٔسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا

> "So when they had despaired of him, they secluded themselves in private consultation."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):80]

saying, 'it is possible that this verse means that the brothers of Yūsuf were declared innocent from the incident of thievery.'

Evidently, this is a clear misunderstanding of the story because the person who was accused of stealing and then turned out he had the stolen item was not released!

Rather, this verse came to show that they retired to confer together in private about what to do and how to return home while their young brother is in prison! Obviously, this verse speaks not about their safety (and innocence) from anything at all.

Reading his book carefully will let you notice numerous ugly mistakes of this kind. And if he listened to the advice of the scholars at the time and humbled himself, he would have realised his mistakes and came to know the truth. Yet, when the insistence on sufficing with what a person knows is combined with thinking highly about oneself, it will cause one to fail in noticing the truth.

We seek refuge with Allāh from such a calamity.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

Islām is One of Allāh's Favours to Mankind

I contemplated the statement of Allāh,

يَمُنُّونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُل لَّا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم بَلِ اللَّهُ
يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

> "They consider it a favour to you that they have accepted Islām. Say, 'Do not consider your Islām a favour to me. Rather, Allāh has conferred favour upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful.'"
>
> [*al-Ḥujarāt* (49):17],

and I came to realise an awe-inspiring meaning. That is; when these people were granted the sense of intellect, they employed it to ascertain the flaws of idols causing them to conclude that such idols are unsuitable to be worshipped, thus directed their worship to the One who created all things. This knowledge is nothing but the fruits of the intellect (*thamara al-'aql*) that Allāh bestowed upon them, with which they could distinguish themselves from beasts.

However, when they thought that they believed in Allāh because of what their granted intellect directed them to, they failed to realise the supremacy of the Granter, and also overlooked what He granted them. How could they claim the ownership of the fruit when the tree is not even theirs? Every indulgent worshipper and seeker of knowledge can only reach what they are upon after seeing the light of awakening, and distinguish the truth using the power of understanding and sound reasoning. Hence, they should express their gratitude and appreciation to the One who granted them the torch in the midst of the darkness they were in.

Relevant to this point is the case of the three men who were trapped in the cave after a boulder blocked its entrance. Each one of them invoked Allāh with one good deed they had done. If they actually noticed the grace of the Granter (i.e. Allāh) when He safeguarded them from the sins they were about to commit, and hence invoked Him with what He bestowed upon them because they felt privileged for being granted what others did not have, then they actually invoked Allāh through Allāh Himself.

On the other hand, if they were focused on their actual good deeds thinking the reward they received is because they are the ones who performed these good deeds, then they would have become from the heedless (*ghafla*) who do not observe their Lord in all their actions. The answer to their prayers in such case will therefore be their continuous showing favour to Allāh for what they did, come to an end.

The same applies to the one whose piety and righteousness is what he thinks of himself, thus proud of. Therefore, he considers himself better than most people and looks down on sinners and becomes arrogant with them. This is indeed a deviation from the right path towards achieving the right attitude and behaviour to earn the pleasure of Allāh, which may be the cause to take the person completely off the track.

Beware! Let none of you misunderstand my words, as I do not advise the pious of you to socialise with sinners to prove you are humbling yourself.

Rather, be angry for the sins they commit in your heart, refuse to be with them, and then contemplate the effect of the plan of fate on them for most of them do not even realise the One whom they disobeyed.

The majority of sinners do not purposely intend to disobey Allāh but rather they just want to follow their desires while, in their heart, disobeying their Lord is something they find hard to do.

Some of them are furthermore attached to the divine Attributes of His Forgiveness (*al-'Afū*) and Forbearance (*al-Ḥalīm*), so tend to overlook the sins they commit due to their strong belief that Allāh will forgive them. None of these are valid excuses, but the pious (*ṣāḥib al-taqwā*) should keep this in mind to try and understand that he has more responsibility than them, because the proof is fully established in him since he knows his Lord and realises his sins.

Think of how Allāh turns the hearts of His servants between His fingers, and remember that the trial may one-day effect you; causing you to deviate from the right path and the sinner to return to the right path.

I wonder at those who show Allāh favour for their good deeds while forgetting the One who guided them and facilitated these deeds for them.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

Innovators (*mubtadaʿīn*)

Know that the Islāmic law operates within a guideline of principles and is protected by a set of rules. It neither has a flaw nor accommodates alien content, similar to all other divine laws.

It should be known however, that the problem lies in what innovators (*mubtadaʿīn*) and ignorant people (*juhhāl*) introduce into religions (*dīn*).

For example, when the Christians witnessed the miracle of Prophet ʿĪsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) resurrecting the dead, they thought no human being is capable of performing this supernatural act that, ending to take the doer (i.e. Jesus) as worthy of worship and godly.

However, if they thought about his nature, they would have realised his unsuitability to be a God due to his imperfect human nature that is in need of others, which is enough evidence to show them that the supernatural miracles he performed are most certainly bestowed by someone else Who allowed them to be executed on his hands.

The deviation may also effect other tertiary issues in religion such as how Christians were ordained to fast one month but they added to it another twenty days, and then decided to assign a particular time in the year to do it; all out of their mere opinions.

This kind of deviation and distortion is also noted in Judaism when the innovations and deviations of the Jews harmed the fundamental and tertiary tenets of their religion. This misguidance is sadly also found in our nation, even though Allāh promised to protect the nation in general from idolatry (*shirk*), doubts (*shak*) about the religion and the severe disputes (about its fundamentals), because this nation is the most reasonable and most understanding.

However, *Iblīs* seduced some of them and despaired from being able to drown the entire nation [into disbelief], although he succeeded in drowning some of this nation into the seas of misguidance. This is because Allāh sent down to His Messenger (ﷺ) a divine Book that He said,

مَّا فَرَّطْنَا فِي ٱلْكِتَٰبِ مِن شَيْءٍ

"We have not neglected in the book a thing."
[*al-An'ām* (6):38]

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) then explained what needed to be explained and clarified through his Sunnah as he was commanded,

وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ
ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them."
[*al-Nahl* (16):44]

Then, he stated [after he completed his mission]: "Indeed I have left you upon a white plain [clear guidance]"[97]

However, some people came afterwards—neither content with what the Prophet (ﷺ) explained and clarified nor satisfied with the way of his Companions—and began to indulge into investigating additional details causing them to divide amongst themselves: One group investigated what religion endeavoured to affirm in the hearts of people and so end up removing this affirmation from people's heart, that the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth both affirm the existence of Allāh through the mentioning of His Divine Attributes. For example, Allāh said,

ٱسۡتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلۡعَرۡشِ

"Then He rose above the Throne."
[*al-A'rāf* (7):54]

and

بَلۡ يَدَاهُ مَبۡسُوطَتَانِ

"Rather, both His hands are extended."
[*al-Mā'idah* (5):64]

and

وَلِتُصۡنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيۡنِيٓ ٣٩

"that you would be brought up under My eye."
[*Ṭāhā* (20):39],

and the Prophet (ﷺ) said "Allāh descends to the lower sky"[98] and that "He extends His Hand to accept the repentance of those who sinned during the day and during the night."[99] And he also stated that Allāh laughs[100] and gets angry. All these statements, though their apparent meanings may let one imagine these attributes resembling creation's attributes and qualities, were only said to affirm the existence of Allāh. Yet Allāh knows that hearts perceive everything in form of images, it hindered the process of imagination by stating,

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[97] Abū Dāwūd, #4607, Tirmidhī, #2676, and Ibn Mājah, #43 on the authority of Irbād Ibn Sāriyah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

[98] Bukhāri, #1145 and Muslim, #758

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ

"There is nothing like unto Him."

[*al-Shurā* (42):11].

This group of people then decided to delve into the utmost miracle, the Qur'ān, for which Allāh confirms its existence; He said,

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ

"We sent the Qur'ān down."

[*al-Qadr* (97):1]

and

نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾

"The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down."

[*al-Shūrah* (26):193]

and

فَذَرْنِى وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ

"So leave Me, [O Muḥammad], with [the matter of] whoever denies the Qur'ān."

[*Qalam* (68):44]

and

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[99] Muslim, #2759

[100] Bukhārī, #2826 and Muslim, #1890

وَهَٰذَا كِتَٰبٌ أَنزَلۡنَٰهُ

"And this is a Book which We have sent down."
[*al-An'ām* (6):92]

Then, He affirmed its existence in the hearts of people,

هُوَ ءَايَٰتُۢ بَيِّنَٰتٞ فِي صُدُورِ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَۚ

"The Qur'ān is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge."
[*al-'Ankabūt* (29):49]

He then affirmed its existence in [the pages of] the book,

فِي لَوۡحٖ مَّحۡفُوظِۭ ﴿٢٢﴾

"[Inscribed] in a Preserved Tablet."
[*al-Burūj* (85):22]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said "Do not travel with the Qur'ān to the lands of the enemy."[101]

Yet, despite all of that, part of these astray groups claimed the Qur'ān is created (*makhlūq*) causing people to no longer hold it in esteem. And claimed it was neither sent down nor possible to be sent down because how can the attribute be indispensable to the One who has the attribute, while the Qur'ān only contains paper and ink? This made them negate what religion endeavoured to affirm by its existence.

This is similar to their attempts to claimed that Allāh, Most High, is neither above the sky nor that He is above His Throne nor descends to the lower sky, as all those are metaphors referring to His Mercy.

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[101] Bukhārī, #2990 and Muslim, #1869

This claim, however, resulted with the removing from the hearts of people what religion wanted to affirm, thus it opposed the purpose of religion.

Another astray group was not content with what the religion revealed and insisted on employing their own reasoning and opinions so they said: "Allāh is on His Throne" as they did not suffice with His statement,

ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ

"Then He rose above His Throne."

[*al-Arʿāf* (7):54]

They were influenced by early fabrications introduced by some deviated people and the forged reports made up by some atheists, hence they become unaware of what is possible to be said about Allāh, and what is not. This made them accept divine Attributes at their face value while in fact, most of these Attributes are said figuratively since Arabic Language is knowingly rich enough to encompass this approach of speech, but this group understood them literally.

Their example is like Juha whose mother asked him to protect the door of the house but what he did was that he pulled off the door and carried it with him which made thieves steal everything in the house. When his mother blamed him for what he did, he replied: "you said protect the door not what is in the house!"[102]

As they imagined Allāh as a magnificent image on the throne they started to interpret it to negate the existence of this image on the throne. It is similar to what they did when they interpreted the phrase, “whoever comes to Me walking, I shall come to him running”[103] to mean being close to Him in rank and position and not being close to Him in distance.

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[102] This is to show that Arabic is a very rich and deep language. So statements and words in Arabic can sometimes mean what it appears and other times said figuratively or to indicate another meaning based on the context. To determine when words are said to mean the literal or metaphoric or indicate a contextual meaning, there are set of principles and guidelines to follow to conclude so.

Yet, they interpret the verse,

إِلَّآ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ فِى ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ ٱلْغَمَامِ

> “What are these people waiting for, perchance, for Allāh to reveal Himself unto them in the shadows of the clouds.”
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):210]

Based on its apparent meaning that ‘He comes by His essence’ making them have an unstable and inconsistent understanding as they apply their understanding randomly.

Moreover, they call what Allāh stated in reference to Him or what Allāh mentioned next to His Name, as Attributes.

He stated that He blew [into Adam] and added *‘soul’* to His Name in some statements! They also affirmed that He created some things with His Hand so they said that the Hand is an attribute used to create Adam alone because otherwise there would be no virtue for Adam in this. However, if they just said He created Adam, no one would have objected. But, they were too busy looking into the virtue of Adam causing them to overlook what is acceptable and unacceptable to attribute to Allāh Who cannot be said He is in physical contact with the creation or employs instruments or tools to create something. Rather, Allāh, in this statement, wanted the virtue of Adam to be from adding his name to Him. They also said: “we call Allāh with the name *'image'* because the Prophet (ﷺ) said 'Allāh created Adam in His image'"[104]

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[103] Bukhārī, #7405 and Muslim, #2675 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiy Allāhu ‘anhu*)

And they understood the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ), "When any among you strikes another man, he should avoid striking the face. He should also avoid cursing him by saying: 'May Allāh disfigure your face and the face of those whose faces resemble yours. For Allāh created Adam in His image.'"[105]

But, if this is intended to refer to Allāh, Exalted is He, it would mean that the Face of Allāh resembles the face of the man. They also narrated the ḥadīth related by Khawlah bint Ḥakīm (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhā*) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The last step of Allāh was in the battle of Biwaj"[106] and they did not know that the intended meaning is to assert that the last battle Muslims fought was in Biwaj, which is the battle of Hunain.

Further, they are unaware of how their lack of knowledge in ḥadīth and the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) manifests, as they overlooked that the Prophet (ﷺ) said "O Allāh step hard on [the tribe of] Mudar."[107]

However, they insisted on taking the apparent meaning and that Allāh literally stepped on that area. There is no doubt, according to their understanding, that they think that Allāh was on earth then ascended high above!

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[104] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 13/152, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, #129 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

[105] Bukhārī, #2559 and Muslim, #2612 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

[106] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 6/409, Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, 22/275, 704. It is very weak.

[107] Bukhārī, #804 and Muslim, #1540

They also claimed that its permissible to describe Allāh with boredom and attribute Allāh with that based on the ḥadīth, "Allāh does not get bored until you become bored,"[108] and they said this only because they are ignorant in the Arabic language and did not comprehend that this understanding entails no praise because based on their understanding, if a person becomes bored then He becomes bored too and that is no praise by all standards.

Rather, the actual meaning is that Allāh will never get bored even if people become bored. They even went further to say that "kinship hangs upon the knot of Allāh's garment and it is derived from His Name, *al-Raḥmān*[109] is evidence that Allāh's garment is an from His Essence though this report and what they rely on are too weak to even be accepted to generate a ruling about nullifying the wudu.

This is because most of the reports they bring forth are fabricated by atheists. Another example of their fabricated reports and their attempts to endorse such reports is what they quote to be allegedly reported from Abdullah Ibn 'Amr (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhuma*) that, 'Allāh created Angels from the light of His chest and arms.'[110] They say: "we accept this report as per its apparent meaning" but then compromise to say: "yet, we do not affirm Allāh has any limbs" so their reasoning became as if they are saying someone is standing up but he is not standing up. And, when they read the verse,

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[108] Bukhārī, #43 and Muslim, #785

[109] *Musnad* Ahmad, #1321

[110] *Al-Sunnah* of 'Abdullāh Ibn Aḥmad (p. 51) as a statement said by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhuma*). See *Silsalah al-Sahīhah*, #458. It is weak

قَآئِمَۢا بِٱلْقِسْطِ

"Standing up (maintaining) His creation in justice."

[*Āl-ʿImrān* (3):18]

they disputed over whether Allāh can be described as standing up or not because with their idiocy, which is worse than the idiocy of Juha, they could not understand that,

قَآئِمَۢا

"standing up"

[*Āl-ʿImrān* (3):18]

is a metaphor meaning to maintain.

The purpose of mentioning some of their deviation in this regard is to hinder the effect of what they say, so that no one inclines or settles with what they say. Moreover, being careful and cautious about them—to avoid their deviation—is indeed a rewarding deed.

No doubt, the right path is the path of the righteous predecessors, but I would still like to quote what Imām Aḥmad said: 'It is a sign of lack of knowledge to ape [the principle creedal tenets of Islām] of someone else' because when it comes to the principle creedal tenets of Islām, no one should ape anyone even if he was a person held in high esteem.

That being the case, whenever you come across a statement that does not conform to the sound principle creedal tenets of Islām spoken by a reputable person from the people of knowledge, you should say, this statement cannot be truly his and it must be a mistake from the one narrating it because this scholar has proven he does not state a view without relying on an evidence or principle.

And if we hypothetically assume such a statement was really said by him, then we know that no one is allowed to blindly follow any person, even if he was Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) and Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) when it comes to the principle creedal tenets of Islām. This rule (no one is allowed to follow a fundamental belief blindly) is significant and vital; hence let no big names ever cause anyone to oppose what does not conform (to the principle creedal tenets).

I only intended to mention the aforesaid to explain that our religion is sound but some people introduced into it a deviation that harmed people.[111]

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[111] The term '*Usūl al-Uddīn*' was translated herein to mean the principle creedal tenets of Islām, which are the tenets that are agreed on and established by texts. This does not refer to the issues deduced based on understanding texts, which normally scholars differ as each understand a text differently. It should be noted that this translation is based on its meaning according to the righteous predecessors because the connotation and understanding of such term according to the theological philosophers (*mutakkalimūn*) is different, and as could be noted Ibn al-Jawzī emphasised the importance of following the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) and abstain from the slips of theological philosophers.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

Deviation of Ascetics

The ascetics (*zuhhād*) incorporated into religion what made people turn off to the extent (they deem their own deeds to be inferior), believing the actions of the ascetics are impossible to adapt and thus impossible for them to tread on the right path.

Most of the evidences used by this group are taken from storytellers (*quṣṣas*); when a layperson who does not even know how to perform ablution (*wūḍu*) joins their assembly, they shower him with the gems of Al-Junayd and the signs of Al-Shibli, causing this layperson to believe that the path to gaining the pleasure (*riḍā*) of Allāh is to devote himself in being with this group.

This involves invoking Allāh in isolation (*'uzla*) and abandoning work that earns some provision to support his family, while he neither knows the pillars of prayer (*salah*), nor is disciplined by knowledge (*'ilm*), nor has learned manners through sitting with the people of knowledge!

All this makes his isolation useless and benefit gained from it only what a donkey would benefit from a barn. Furthermore, spending long periods of time living under such life conditions; taking the minimum of everything, he may start to hallucinate and imagine seeing Angels so he starts to keep his head low and puts his hand forward for them to kiss them.

Plentiful are the examples of those who experience such delusions and many are those who left their farms to sit in a gathering far from people, doing no work at all and relaxing from the hard work he used to do. If someone advises him to visit a sick person, he would refuse arguing that it is not part of his schedule or habits. Indeed, a habit that stands against the guideline and directions of religion is cursed. All this leaves laypeople with the impression and belief that religion advocates these methods and way of life, not the way of life and methods advocated by jurists (*fuqaha*) and exegetes (*tafsīr*), thus they become misguided.

Worse still, some of those ascetics do not care whether they act according to the rules of religion or not. The ignorance (*jahl*) of this group varies; some deem everything is lawful and permissible. They argue that they are in a higher status thus no one should ever object to what they do, so they indulge in sins, while others are concerned with their public image, issue religious verdicts inspite of their ignorance just to save face and so people do not say, 'the Sheikh does not know the answer!'

Shaikh Abū Ḥakīm, may Allāh bestow His Mercy upon him, informed me that one day Al-Sharīf Al-Dahalti, one of those ascetics that people go in hope of receiving a blessing visited him. A person asked him a question, 'Would a woman whose husband divorced her thrice be lawful for him if she delivered a boy?' Abū Ḥakīm answered: 'No, she does not become lawful for her husband in this case.' Al-Sharīf interjected, 'Be quite! By Allāh I have been telling people all the way from the city of Baṣrah to here that she becomes lawful for her husband!'

And, Shaikh Abū Ḥakīm once narrated to me that the grandfather of Adhād Al-Ḥaddād, who was looked up to by some laypeople as a person of knowledge, endorsed the marriage of a woman without asking her about the period of waiting (*'iddah*). The judge nullified the marriage and admonished the one who endorsed such marriage. The woman then returned frustrated to him to blame him and said, 'How could you endorse such a marriage when that is the case? I have no knowledge of this matter!' Adhād replied arrogantly, 'Pay no attention to what they say for you are a pure and purified woman!'

Some jurists also told me that there was a worshipper who used to practice the prostration of forgetfulness in the prayer for years. When he was asked about it, he said: 'By Allāh, I never forgot anything in the *salah* but I do it out of cautiousness (*wara'*)!' The jurists told him: 'The *salah* you prayed all these years are invalid because you intentionally added a prostration that is not prescribed in such a case.'

Amongst those who introduced deviated ways into the religion are some of the Ṣūfis who embarked on ways, most of which contravene religion. The religious ones amongst them continue reducing the amounts of their food and wear harsh clothes, all the while doing things not part of Islām.

Another story is the story of a man named Kathīr who once entered the *Masjid* of Al-Manṣūr and said, 'I made a vow to Allāh to do something but I did not keep my promise. For this reason, I forced myself not to eat for forty days.' I was told by those who saw him that he almost died in the last ten days to the point when they made him drink some water, they could hear a sound similar to the sound of boiling water, and it was not long until he passed away because of that. So, observe the case of this pathetic ignorant man whose ignorance caused his death.

There are some of them who embarked on new deviated ways where they indulged in worldly passions (*shahwa*) and pleasures (*hawā*). Accepting to eat and drink from unlawful sources, consume alcohol, wear silk and accompany those whose purpose in life is acquiring worldly pleasures; they considered Ṣūfism was about just wearing a garments and a nice turban. All this was done just so they could protect their wealth and social status. Some of them prescribed actions for others to adopt based on spurious texts.

Another group of them indulged in singing, dancing and idle playing. Some among this group claimed they reached the level of passionate love (*ʿishq*) with Allāh, and some claimed hulūl [i.e. Allāh dwells within them]. Others became involved in all that just to have fun times. Whichever group they belong to, this deviation totally corrupts the laypeople.

To explain this section in detail will be too lengthy but you can refer to some of the books I have authored in which I have addressed this topic in detail such as the book *Talbis Iblīs*.[112]

The point I make is that people should know that religion is complete, thus a reasonable man is the one who follows the way of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions disregarding the ways of others and not blindly submitting [in matters of principle creedal tenets of Islām]. If people comply with this advice, they will surely be in no need to receive any other advice.

You should also beware of the rigidity of communicators, the sophism of philosophers, crowds of ascetics, the greed of people of desires, the group of scholars who do not act upon the knowledge they acquired, and the worship of the worshippers they endorsed without knowledge.

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[112] Dār as-Sunnah Publishers has published the English translation of this famous work. This is an excellent book on this subject and this is the first time the entire book is translated in English, 'The Devil's Deceptions' (*Talbis Iblīs*): Ibn al-Jawzī, 2014.

When Allāh supports a person with His Kindness, He engulfs him with a sound understanding to detach himself from the shell of blind following [in respect to the principle creedal tenets of Islām], and make him equivalent to an entire nation, he therefore cares not to follow any of the deviations of man or the blame people throw at him because he leads a life driven by clear evidence.

I ask Allāh to safeguard us from aping the principle creedal tenets of Islām of people who are held in high-esteem or looked up to, and I ask Him to guide us to follow the way of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) because without a doubt he is the diamond of the universe.

I ask Allāh to bestow His peace and blessings upon him and his Companions, and I ask Allāh to let us be among those who follow him.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

Nature of Time

Know that time is a variable and the conditions of life are frequently changing with no condition ever remaining stable. Allāh said in the verse,

وَتِلْكَ ٱلْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ

> "And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people"
>
> [*Āl-ʿImrān* (3):140]

This is why mankind sometimes experiences poverty (*faqr*), wealth (*ghana*), glory (*ʿaz*), humiliation (*dhull*), joy (*farḥ*) and sorrow (*hamm*). One day, you find the supporters of a man rejoicing for his happiness and the next day you find his enemies gloating for his calamity.

However, the person enraptured of fortunate is he who adheres to one core principle in all situations; righteousness and piety (*taqwā*). Because if he is content it will adorn him, if he is poor it will open for him the gates of forbearance (*ṣabr*). If he is safe from hardships it will make the grace of Allāh be complete on him. If he is tested it will help him to overcome the hardships. He will neither be affected by the ease or hardships of time, nor be changed by the changes of his life condition because all life conditions never last and always change.

Fearing Allāh (*taqwā*) is the basis of safety (*salāma*), and is a sleepless guard that pulls you up whenever you fall or slip, helping you to never violate the laws of religion.

On the other hand, the condemned one is he who is deceived by a joy acquired sinfully. As this joy will leave him alone suffering a great loss.

It is for these reasons, you should bind to piety in all situations because with it you will be able to see ease in times of hardship and health in times of sickness.

These are the benefits of piety (*taqwā*) that you will reap in this life and the reward is known, which you shall receive in the Hereafter.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

Restrain your Desires (*hawā*)

I contemplated an amazing matter where I found an interesting trend. A believer is often trialled and suffers hardships, while worldly passions and pleasures are always presented to him and made within the reach of his hand.

This is more evident in cases where pleasures and desires emerge with ease and without any effort from his part. Example of this being when a person happens to be alone in the company of a woman he loves in a secluded area far from the prying eyes and attention of people. To this effect, I say indeed Allāh is free from all defects! Truly, in such situations the impact of Imān manifests itself for by Allāh, was it not due to overcoming such a situation, Prophet Yūsuf (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) would not have reached such a high rank and received the pleasure of Allāh.

O my brothers, can you imagine what his status would be if he submitted to his desires when the woman tried seducing him? Compare the case of Yūsuf (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) with the case of Adam (*ʿalayhi as-salām*)—the former suppressed his desires and the latter softened and acted according to what he desired—then measure the outcome of the two cases in the scale of intelligence and make what you conclude the shield you use whenever you desire a (unlawful) worldly pleasure.

Verily worldly pleasures come in front of believers all the time. Therefore if he ever meets these tempting unlawful pleasures in the battlefield (of life), while his soldiers appointed to reflect the consequences of his actions are far from him, he will surely lose the battle. This is why I feel the condition of those who fall in this trap is like saying to them: 'Hold on where you are! You have to live with whatever you choose for yourself.'

There is nothing he can do afterwards except spend his time in remorse (*nadm*) and tears (*baqā'*). If he manages to come out of the hole, he will only come out with wounds and scratches. Indeed, many are those whose feet slipped in this hole and could never lift their feet afterwards.

There is no better evidence to reflect on than the humiliation (*dhull*) of the brothers of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), who plotted against their brother, when they said to him afterwards,

وَتَصَدَّقۡ عَلَيۡنَآ

"give charity to us."

[*Yūsuf* (12):88]

to realise the drastic consequences of sins. Then try to compare their case with the case of their brother, Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), who never submitted to his whims. Even though his brothers turned to Allāh afterwards and Allāh accepted their repentance (*tawbah*). The one whose garment is free of holes is not like the one whose garment has patches covering the holes.

O my brothers, beware of everything your *'self'* desires (*shahwa*) and ensure to rein in the horses of yours whims (*hawā*).

Be careful of the piling clouds because then you will need to climb up a hill as the valley in such case will not be safe (from a deluge).

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

The Secret of delayed response to Supplications

I have been contemplating an awe-inspiring situation; when a believer suffers a calamity or a hardship he starts supplicating and praying devoutly to Allāh but still none of his prayers are answered.

Yet as soon as he is about to fall into despair, Allāh looks into his heart so that if He finds him content with what Allāh decreed for him and still aspiring to receive the grace of Allāh, Allāh often hastens answering his prayers because faith (*imān*) is rectified at that point and *Shayṭān* is defeated, and the grades of people are made manifest. This meaning is entailed in the verse,

حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ ٱلرَّسُولُ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَعَهُۥ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

> "until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When is the help of Allāh?'"
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):214]

The case of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) manifests his endless hope in Allāh to bring back his lost child (Yūsuf) and when another child of his was taken away from him, he did not despair but maintained his hope in Allāh and said,

> عَسَى ٱللَّهُ أَن يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا
>
> "Perhaps Allāh will bring them to me all together."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):83]

Similar was the hope of Prophet Zakariyyah (*'alayhi as-salām*) who said,

> وَلَمْ أَكُنۢ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤﴾
>
> "And never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy."
>
> [*Maryam* (19):4]

Beware of falling into despair lest answers to prayers take a long time because Allāh is the Sovereign Possessor (*al-Mālik*), the Most Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) and Best Planner and the One Who knows the best for your affairs. You need to heed to the fact He wants to test the real person you are, to see your devoted supplications to Him and to reward you for your patience (*sabr*).

Know that He tests you with delaying the answer of your supplications to combat the whispers (*waswasa*) of *Iblīs*. Each one of these reasons is enough to increase the level of your hope in Allāh's grace and calls for thankfulness (*shukr*) of Allāh because He preferred you with trials in order to turn to Him—for it is nothing but affluence when a person becomes in need, and then turns to Allāh for His help.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

Instinct

As the body of man cannot be maintained except by averting any harm and assaying the benefits; Allāh furnished mankind with an innate desirous nature to direct him to bring forth the welfare; and with anger (*ghadab*) to avert harm.

If not for the innate desire (*hawā*) to eat, a person would not have ever consumed any food and thus become a feeble person. He was therefore made naturally disposed towards food. But, the desire is quenched as soon as he receives what sustains and nourishes his body. The same can be said about drinks, apparel and sexuality.

The benefit attained from adapting to sexual urges is noted in two aspects: survival of mankind, which is the main benefit, and ridding of the excess element (i.e. semen) that causes harm if remains inside the body.

Was it not for being naturally disposed towards fulfilling sexual needs, none would have even considered it, thus leading to harming one's inside where semen accumulates, and extinguishing offspring of mankind!

The knower (of Allāh and His commands) came to realise the bigger picture contrary to the ignorant ones who gives in to their lusts and desires. The latter could not understand the objective for having natural sexual needs, wasting their life in vain and overlooking the main purpose for which they were created. Not only did their lusts and desires ruin their wealth, honour and religion but caused their destruction also.

We see many affluent persons indulging themselves in constant buying of new female-slaves merely to entice their lust with them, but it was not that long after until they were drained of strength and energy.

As a result, causing their own destruction similar to those whose anger exceeded the limits—causing them to self-ruin and of those whom they loves.

He who comes to realise the fact that sexual urges were created to help the body survive the journey of this life and not for the sensual pleasures per se—because the attained pleasure in what is sought is to pave the road to deliver the benefit—will understand that if the purpose was just to give pleasure, Allāh would not have made beasts and animals receive more share of it than humans.

Glad tidings is for those who come to realise this truth and do not let desires make them stray from understanding the reality and truth of the creation.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

The Consequences of Sin and Grace of Obedience

The one who heeds to the consequences of sins will see how ugly sins are.

When I thought about the condition of some people I personally know who admit committing fornication and other sins. I noticed their slips and failures in this life are beyond belief, even though they are known to be tough and firm. It seems as if they are covered with darkness causing them to alienate the hearts [of people].

If they ever receive any money, it would mainly be from the wealth of others, and if they endure a financial hardship they begin to blame and rebuke destiny and fate. Such dirt and filth (of sins) made them ever busy to heed to the Hereafter.

On the other hand however, when I thought of the condition of those who strived and did not comply with their desires and abstained from the unlawful. I found some of them basked in the pleasures of this life; enjoying delicious foods, comfortable beds, an easy life and an esteemed social status.

And if they ever endured a financial difficulty that made their life tight, their patience brings froth easiness into their life while their content brings forth pleasure to it. The condition of this type of people made me understand the statement of Allāh,

إِنَّهُۥ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

> "Indeed, he who fears Allāh and is patient, then indeed, Allāh does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):90]

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

Stay at the Doorstep of your Lord

An intelligent person should stand at the doorstep of his Lord all the time and cling to the robe of His grace when he obeys Him and even when he disobeys Him. He ought to seek His intimacy while being alone in His companionship; hence should he find a barrier making him sense strangeness in his heart while being in His companionship, he should endeavour to remove this barrier. Just like one poet said,

Do you feel estranged due to what you have reaped?
Be good, if you wish, and you shall then enjoy intimacy

Yet if he senses his inner self inclining to the worldly life, he should call to his Lord to grant him all what he wishes from it. If he senses his inner self inclining towards the Hereafter, he should ask his Lord to guide him to work for it.

And, when he fears the harm of this worldly life he should ask his Lord to rectify his heart (*iṣlāḥ al-qalb*) and cure him from the sickness this life brought forth to him—because when the heart is rectified it will never seek what may harm it. Truly, a person who lives by such standards will be a person indulging in happiness.

It is a must nevertheless for a person to ensure having the quality of fearing Allāh (*taqwā*) in such a state, because intimacy (*uns*) with the Lord cannot be without it.

The pious whose fear of Allāh has prevailed in their lives will keep themselves busy from everything except supplicating and seeking Allāh's Help.

It was related that when Qutaybah Ibn Muslim saw the army of the Turks, he was amazed at the large numbers of their soldiers, so he asked, 'Where is Muḥammad Ibn Wāsiʿ?'

They told him he was in the far end of the right flank of the army leaning on his arc and raising his finger supplicating to Allāh.

Qutaybah remarked, 'That one finger (supplicating to Allāh) is more beloved to me than a one-hundred thousand sharp drawn swords.'

Thus when the Muslim army defeated the Turks he asked Muḥammad, 'What were you doing?' He said: 'I was [invoking Allāh] to secure all the ways for your success.'

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

Prudence Guarantees Success

He who basks in the various graces Allāh has bestowed upon him should only show what manifests on him and not show all that he has. Truly this is one of the greatest pleasures (*ladhāt*) of this life (i.e. showing what you have to the public) that the trait of being resolute dictates to abstain from, because the evil eye is real (*'ayn al-ḥaqq*).[113]

When I looked into the blessings and graces, I realised that showing them to people is something that the nature of mankind is apt to do as it makes people feel good. Yet when a person shows them to a friend, it cannot be guaranteed that his heart may not become covetously frustrated, and if he shows them to an enemy then he is most likely to be envied and given an evil eye.

Nonetheless, I found out that the evil of the enviers (*ḥāsid*) is always there because when you are in a trial he is gloating and when you are provided with grace, he envies and gives you the evil eye.

Though the one who has been blessed by Allāh longs to frustrate those who envy him, he does not wish to risk losing what he has since he will most likely suffer the evil eye. The joy attained from frustrating the envier by showing what grace one has is not worth ruining the very grace he has been granted.

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[113] See Bukhārī, #5740 and Muslim. #2187

That being said, hiding the graces you are endowed with all the time is a resolute decision. If a man discloses his age he will be either looked upon as feeble if he was old or looked down on if he was young.

And if a man shares with others his beliefs, his opponents will manifest their enmity, and if he discloses the size of his wealth, he will be either disrespected if it was too little or envied if it was abundant.

The same applies to everything else that I have not mentioned. So be not a reckless ignorant who informs people of all that they have and their secrets do not settle within them unless they disclose them to the wrong people.

Indeed, a little word you utter may cause your destruction.

CHAPTER EIGHTY

Caution against Falling into Sin

I realised it is the innate nature of people that whenever they fall or slip (into sin), to look at the obstacle that made them fall or slip, for this nature is inherent within them to avoid being tripped over again, or to consider how he overlooked this obstacle though he was careful and cautious.

I concluded a gem from such an observance that is: he who slips often should either find the obstacle to avoid it in future or belittle his own 'self' for allowing such a fall despite being cautious! This is because most of those who worry about their falls only seem to be concerned with themselves, i.e. how they could have made such a fall (into a sin) despite the precautions they took!

Indeed, I wonder at such people! How could you be fooled with the deception of a sin that your intellect considers subtly, and the eye of your thoughts shows you its consequences? How could you favour a mortal (pleasure you receive from such a sin) over the immortal (pleasures you shall be rewarded with in Paradise?) What a loss indeed! How a person can prefer the joy of sleep [i.e. sin] over the attention of a transaction [good deed]!

Oh you! You have sold what you had (of lawful joy) for loads of regret that no back can carry; and had your head hung low after it was held high, bringing forth endless tears of sorrow for the ugly sin you committed. The ugliest scene in fact, would ever be when you are asked [on the Day of Judgment]: 'What was it that made you sin? What for? Why?'

Truly, you are a person whose arrogance and pride flipped the hand of the scale and his share was weighted though the scale is broken!

CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

The Fruit of Guidance

I contemplated the verse,

فَمَنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٣﴾

> "Whoever follows my guidance will never go astray or be in hardship."
>
> [*Ṭāhā* (20):123]

The exegetes of Qur'ān (*mufassirūn*) explained, 'The word '*my guidance*' refers to the Book of Allāh and the Messenger of Allāh.'

This explanation is something I realised to be truthful because each person who adheres to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. And acts upon both of them, safeguards himself from misguidance (*ḍalāla*) without doubt (*shak*). He reaches a high rank in the Hereafter if he dies upon it. He will also be immune against the hardships of this life and the verse,

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾

> "Whoever fears Allāh, He shall make a way out for him."
>
> [*al-Ṭalāq* (65):2]

testifies to this meaning.

If you ever find such a person in a state of hardship, his certainty (*yaqīn*) of Allāh's reward will change the bitter to sweet honey and yet, he will be content with all his life conditions.

It often happens however that if he is trialled, it is due to a slip or a deviation from the path of righteousness and piety (*taqwā*). The one who fears Allāh constantly will be immune against all difficulties and calamities in most cases.

But if you ever find a calamity befalling a person who fears Allāh it would most likely be because of a sin (*dhanm*) previously committed.

And if it was not because of a sin he may have committed, the trial will be akin to letting his golden patience (*ṣabr*) go into the oven of calamities so that it comes out red gold; hence he finds pain sweet because he thinks of the One who befell this calamity on him and not the calamity per se.

Al-Shiblī, the pious worshipper, said, '[O Allāh], people love You because of your grace (*ni'ma*) upon them, and I love You because of the trials (*balā'*) You befell upon me.'

CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

Ill Effects of Sins

Only a person intoxicated with his heedlessness (*ghafla*) receives pleasure (*ladha*) from sins (*ma'siya*). Whereas the believer never enjoys a sin because his knowledge of prohibition (*'ilm al-taḥrīm*) of sins and their punishment (*'aqūba*) cuts him away from such attained pleasure.

If his knowledge of Allāh is profound, the eye of his knowledge notifies him of the nearness of the One whom commanded against the sin and that, by itself shall disturb his enjoyment of (committing) this sin.

Yet, if the self-desire (*hawā*) was overwhelming and prevailing, the heart (*qalb*) will still be rankled (and annoyed) by such observances even if it does incline towards desires (*shahwa*).

The joy of sin lasts except momentarily, which is then followed by everlasting regret (*nadm*) and continuous crying (*baqā'*) and being sorry for what has gone.

Even if he is assured forgiveness (*'afū*), he will stand there ashamed of the blame for the sin he committed. Sins (*dhunūb*) truly bring forth nothing but ugliness and bad news! The strength of desiring to commit a sin depends on the level of one's inadvertency (*ghafla*).

CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

Socialising Versus Solitude (*'uzla*)

One day I went to the *Masjid* of al-Risāfah to gain some solitude (*khawla*). My thoughts roamed around thinking about the place and the righteous people and scholars who used to be in it.

While I was there, I found some of the people who abstained from worldly affairs and lived in a small house next to the *Masjid.* I asked one of them, 'How long have you been here in this solitude?' He replied, 'For around forty years.'

After thinking about it I found out that his house was dirty and in an unclean state; I also started to think how such a person abstained from marriage for so long! My *'self'* (*nafs*) then started to commend his state of solitude and condemn this worldly life and its deception; but the voice of knowledge objected to such a notion and urged the sense of reasoning to understand the reality of the matter. I realised that principles of religion corroborate what knowledge advocates, so I spoke to my *'self'* and said, 'You should know that they [i.e. abstainers] are of two types:

The first type are those who strive to forebear such conditions, missing the benefit resulting from being in the company of people of knowledge and missing the virtues of work; having offspring, bringing benefit to others and benefiting from sitting with intellectual people.

The solitude turns them into experiencing a condition similar to beasts as they start to favour isolation for the mere sake of isolation. In fact, their nature may become harsh and their character (*khalq*) may become rigid. The effect of not releasing the accumulated semen in their bodies may poison, ruin health and mind.

Such solitude may even cause them doubts and give rise to (deviant) thoughts of being one of the most pious favoured servants of Allāh (*awliyā'*) and thus becoming content with what they already know.

Shayṭān may manipulate them and cause hallucination (*khiyālāt*), making them think they are miracles or supernatural powers (*karāmāt*)—and worse still, he may start to think he is the ultimately favoured slave while in fact he is unaware of people's resentment (*karāha*) towards him.

This is because the Prophet (ﷺ) "forbade a person to sleep alone in the house"[114] but such people spend all their time alone by themselves. He (ﷺ) "forbade people from abstaining from marriage"[115] and what they do is what he forbade. He (ﷺ) "forbade from isolating oneself to worship (*rahabāniyah*)"[116] and all that are from of the subtle tricks (*khuda'*) of *Iblīs* whereby he misleads people to fall into misguidance through what may appear as noble and beneficial.

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[114] *Musnad* Ahmad, 2/91, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*); see *al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, #60

[115] Bukhārī, #5073 and Muslim, #1402

[116] Al-Daramī, 2/133, on the authority of Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*); see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*, #1336

The second type are those Shaikhs who maintain worship and love of Allāh and have no power to heed to this worldly life, so they were in solitude through no real choice for they have no shelter to stay in, and therefore are excused as they take the ruling of the sick.

The first type decided to be disconnected from knowledge (*'ilm*), work (*'amal*) and earning their provision. All their endeavours hinged on hopes that some inspiration may knock on their doors, so they sufficed with blindness after they were able to see and sickness after being healthy.

My *'self'* (*nafs*) objected to what I said and told me, 'I do not accept what you said. You are in favour of marrying pretty women and enjoying the delicious food and drinks! If you are not from the people of worship then at least do not condemn them!' I replied, 'If you are willing to understand, I will talk with you because if you care for the apparent images (without seeing beyond) then you have no intellect!'

As for seeking pretty women for marriage; there are many purposes for which marriage is sought, namely having children, maintaining healthy body by letting out semen that may cause harm if accumulated and to ensure it is completely out, which cannot be except if a person is with someone he is totally attracted to. Semen may come out without the need for penetration, yet only with sexual intercourse can it assuredly rid all of it and thereafter making the mind clear without becoming further distracted. This is similar to advising the judge to eat food before delivering any judgement and also forbid him to give a ruling while he is angry or engorged. To achieve the full purpose, the children produced shall be more perfect. Besides, the self has to satisfy its share just like how the camel has to eat to survive its journey and maintain its strength.

As for the food and drinks, it is only the ignorant who seek such pleasures from it or for the sake of it. These graces are intended to remove the distractions resulting from hunger so the mind remains not occupied with such matters.

And if you ponder upon the condition of the first generation of Muslims you shall be amazed. The Prophet (ﷺ) married 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*) and she was a beautiful lady, he saw Zainab (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*) whom he liked, so he married her and the same case was with Safiyyah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*). He (ﷺ) also used to send someone to propose on his behalf if someone suggested one for him and he had interest in marriage.

'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) had four wives and seventeen female-slaves when he died. And before this nation, there was Prophet Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) who had one-hundred wives while Prophet Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) had one-thousand wives. Hence he who claims that such way is defiance or faulty or that these people were following their desires and spent their lives in such purposes while they could have used their life for better things, is a person who accuses the perfect people with being deficient while, in fact it is he whose understanding is deficient.

Sufyān al-Thawrī used to have a roast lamb and faloudhaj[117] whenever he travelled and he was known for eating good food and used to say: 'If you do not treat your ride well (i.e. your body), it will never operate.'

These pleasures that I have pointed out, if intended for the natural need to have or to satisfy the self, or to achieve the worldly and religious purposes through them, are valid and correct. The objection (is not valid) of those who bow and prostrate without understanding the prayer (*salah*) they perform and use different forms of *dhikr* of Allāh with words that are unsuitable.

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[117] A type of sweets

Nay, it is knowledge that alone stands as the best attribute and the most honourable act of worship, for it directs one to the benefits and speaks out the advices.

The benefit of knowledge is well known to extend to others while the benefit of someone's asceticism (*zuhd*) does not go beyond the doorstep of the ascetic. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "To be a reason for the guidance of a man is better for you than all that the sun shines on"[118]

[To understand this meaning], bear in mind the superiority of Messengers over Prophets. And the superiority of hunting animals over animals that cannot hunt, and the superiority of mud used for beneficial purposes and the useless mud.

The ultimate purpose of scholars is to know through their knowledge (*'ilm*), the permissible to enjoy while most of the ascetics are ignorant being enslaved with kissing the hand because they abandoned what has been made permissible.

It is often the solitude being the reason for missing much of the knowledge required to rectify the affairs of people and the cause of calamities from which the religion of a person has been ruined.

If solitude (*'uzla*) is required then it is only when secluding oneself from evil. And Allāh knows best.

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[118] Bukhārī, #3009 and Muslim, #2406

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR

Consequences of Sin (*maʿāṣī*)

He who enjoys intellect and wittiness ought to be careful of the outcome of sins (*maʿāṣī*) because the relationship between mankind and Allāh, Most High, is not a blood relation or one of kinship. Rather it is a relationship based on divine justice (*qisṭ*) and fairness (*ʿadl*). If His forbearance (*ḥilm*) encompasses the sins (*dhunūb*), it should be known that if He wills He forgives all sins no matter how large they are; and if He wills He will punish for the sins regardless of how small they are. Therefore one ought to show so much more caution and care.

I witnessed some affluent people indulging in injustice (*ẓulm*) and sins (*maʿāṣī*) of all kinds, subtle (*bāṭin*) and apparent (*ẓāhir*); thus they were punished from whence they have not taken into account, causing their roots to be removed and the basis they founded for their offspring to be demolished.

All this was because they overlooked the rights of Allāh upon them and assumed the good deeds they have performed shall avail them and avert the effect of their sins, therefore the ship of their assumptions were tilting causing the water of Allāh's plan to enter into the ship and flood them.

I also saw some people who considered themselves from the people of knowledge who were heedless (*ghāfil*) in their privacy forgetting that Allāh sees them. This negligence (*ghafla*) wiped off their virtues and reputation when being in public, hence they were out there but non-existent; rejoice is absent when seeing them and hearts no longer long to meet them.

Mind the observance of Allāh, Most High, because His justice does not miss an atom and His punishment will take place, no matter how much time it takes. It might happen that a person may think he is forgiven while the punishment is just postponed and indeed sins have severe consequences.

Beware and be mindful of Allāh in your privacy! Beware and be mindful of Allāh while being in public!

Beware and be mindful of Allāh in your intentions! Because Allāh sees you at all times.

And beware of misunderstanding His Generosity and Forbearance because many have been lured, so mind your sins and erase them by all means.

And there is nothing better than invoking Allāh in humility while dieting from sins so He may forgive.

This chapter shall benefit the person who is interested in maintaining his relationship with Allāh. This is why some of those who are constantly mindful of Allāh said, 'I was once capable of taking a sinful pleasure that is not a major sin, so I was struggling with my desirous self who wanted it, convincing me that it is just a minor sin and the grace and generosity of Allāh is immense.

But I said to my *'self'*, 'If you overcome this sin that you desire you will stand out and be proud, but if you commit this sin then what would that make you!?'

I thus reminded my *'self'* about the people who used to allow themselves to commit such minor sins in the hope they will be forgiven afterwards and how their names are no longer remembered and how people no longer became interested in being with them.

These words admonished and convinced my *'self'* to change its mind about committing this sin. And with Allāh is all success.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE

Underestimating Sins

Many people underestimate matters they find trivial and minor, while in fact they compromise the principle tenets of Islām. For example how students of knowledge borrow a book but never return it, or when someone enters upon a person eating so that he could eat with him; or being lenient when it comes to backbiting enemies as this gives them self-satisfaction; or looking at what is unlawful to look at and giving a verdict (*fatwa*) without knowledge just so no one can say he does not know etc.

The least effect of such sins degrades the rank of one who commits them in the sight of Allāh and among people.

It may be said to such a person, 'O you who was entrusted to a small matter but betrayed it, how could you hope for the pleasure of the Judge while you are indulging in sins thinking you will be forgiven?'"

One of the righteous predecessors said: 'I underestimated a bite (of food) I had forty years ago and to this day I am suffering because of it.'

So take heed of the words of the experienced and be mindful of Allāh in all your actions. Consider the consequences and realise the greatness of the Commander. Beware of a belittled blow or a little spark, as it may burn down a town.

The meanings I have pointed out are just a few indicating much, and a model by which you can identify all the belittled sins.

Knowledge (*'ilm*) and being mindful of Allāh (*muraqaba*) in all your affairs shall help you to realise what you have overlooked to remember, and teach you to avoid the evil effect of sins.

And there is neither might nor power except with the help of Allāh.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX

Conditions of Accepting *Duʿā'*

I realised that my *'self'* acts in surprising ways; it asks Allāh for what it needs and forgets the crimes its committed!

I rebuked it, 'O evil self (*nafs al-sū'*), how could a person like you dare to speak!

If you ever should utter a word, it should be to ask for His forgiveness alone.'

It replied, 'Then from whom should I ask what I need?' I replied, 'How stubborn are you to realise the intended. I only advise you to repent sincerely then ask for what you want.'

It is similar to how we advise the one who intends to travel in order to commit a sin. If you had no food except a dead animal you find, it is unlawful for you to eat it. If one says, 'Would you let him die then?' We reply, 'No he should repent from the sin he intended and then to eat.'

How dare you to ask for your needs while forgetting the preceding sins that should keep your head remain low? All you need to do is to busy yourself fixing your previous mistakes and regretting your sins, and then you shall receive what you asked for. It is as has been reported, "He who remembers me abundantly to ask me for his needs, I will grant him the best of what I grant those who ask."[119]

Bishr al-Ḥāfī used to raise his hands to supplicate but then he would return them and say: 'A person like me should not ask as my sins make me too ashamed to ask.'

Though this is specific to Bishr due to his profound knowledge of Allāh, when he was asking he was too shy to ask due to his shortcomings as if he was asking Allāh face to face. The people of heedlessness (*ghafla*) on the other hand, ask while they are far away from Allāh!

You should therefore understand what I have mentioned and busy yourself in repenting from your sins. Besides that, I wonder at the supplications you make! You do not even ask a matter from the matters of this worldly life that are considered important. Rather, you ask for the surplus and do not bother asking for your heart to be rectified in the manner you ask for worldly affairs.

Be resolute and take control of your affairs because your heedlessness makes you stand on the edge of a cliff. Let your grief over your sins busy you from thinking of your needs.

Imām al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was known as being an extremely God-fearing person (*shadīd al-kawf*) and when he was asked about that he said, 'I have no guarantee that He did not say when He viewed some of my sins, 'Go, I shall never forgive you!'

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[119] Tirmidhī, #2926, Darāmī, 11/144—on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*). It was deemed as weak by Ḥāfiẓ al-'Irāqī in his *Taqrīj al-Iḥyā'*, 1/295.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-SEVEN

Do Not Let Your Worship Deceive You

I wonder the most at those who claim knowing Allāh while they are far from it. For he who knows Him is he who fears Him, whereas the one who does not fear Him is surely not from the people of such knowledge.

Among the ascetics (*mutazahhidūn*), there is a group of heedless people (*ahlu'l-taghfīl*) who keep convincing themselves that they are beloved (*maḥbūb*) of Allāh and people whose deeds are accepted (*maqbūl*).

It may happen that they receive many graces they assume to be blessings and virtues while forgetting that they may in fact, be left alone to increase their punishment.

One may even despise others and believe that his rank is preserved while being deceived by some units of prayer (*rak'ah*) he prayed or other worship (*'ibādah*) he did. He may even think he is a *quṭb*[120] on earth and that no one else shall reach his level (*maqām*) and position.

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[120] It is a term used based on severely weak reports to describe *awliyā'* of high ranks.

As if he seems to forget that though Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) spoke to Allāh, Allāh made Prophethood to be transferred to Yusha' [towards the end of his life],[121] and Prophet Zakarriyah (*'alayhi as-salām*) was a person whose supplication (*du'ā'*) was answered but his people cut him (to death) with a saw. Prophet Yaḥyā (*'alayhi as-salām*) was a master yet still he was trialled with a disbeliever who cut his head, and while Bul'aam knew the greatest Name of Allāh, he ended up deviated and was exemplified in a dog.[122]

Moreover, we clarified that previous religions were abrogated and no longer remain in force. The body is alive but it eventually becomes a ruin and vanishes. While the scholar endeavours to reach a rank he aspires to, he was once a child growing up to find out more about his sins and shortcomings.

How many eloquent speakers are there who think high of themselves but if they lived longer than they did they would have considered themselves a mute after seeing the eloquent speakers coming afterwards.

In fact, the speeches and reminders of Ibn Al-Sammak, Ibn 'Ammar, Ibn Sam'un, cannot be suitable to be delivered for some of our students. And, how can a person who spends something be happy of what he spends, when there might be people coming after us thinking what we spent is trivial!

Beware of settling in a place without minding its rules [i.e. do not rely on your actions in this life].

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[121] This is very odd report mentioned by some Israelite reports that Ibn Kathīr refuted and stated that it is true that he became a Prophet after the death of Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*).

[122] Refer to the *Tafsir* of *Surah Al-A'rāf* (7): 175-176.

Let the awaken be heedful while being in a state of disturbance of their condition and belittle much of their worship, fearing being deviated afterwards and of what fate hides for him.

You should know that heeding these points I have mentioned shall behead pride and wash off the glory of arrogance.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT

Be Prepared for Difficult Times

I fear for those whose heart is content with Allāh during times of ease only to fail the test and misbehave during times of difficulty. This is when the real test takes place. Allāh gives and takes away. He builds and destroys; hence the acceptance and contentment of a person with His decree shows during both, the good and bad times. As for him who continues to bask in grace and receives continuous bounties, he is only happy while they exist. Then when he is afflicted with a calamity then his steadfastness is lacking.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, "They were all the same during good times, yet during calamities they would differ." That being the case, an intelligent person is one who is well prepared to confront the war against calamities, which is inevitable. Even if no calamity befalls a person all his life, he should be prepared lest it befalls him on his deathbed. Because if a calamity befalls you and finds you without knowledge that equips you with contentment and patience, then during the moment of death it might take you into disbelief.

I heard a person whom I used to think was pious saying during his final nights (on earth), "My Lord is being unjust to me!" Since then, I have been worried and keen on acquiring enough ammunition to pass that inevitable day. And how would I not be like that when it was reported that at the moment of death, the devil tells his companions, “focus on [deviating] this (dying) man for after he passes away, you will not then have power over him!”

What heart would hold firmly when breath will be stripped away and when the soul will be pulled out of the body knowing that you will depart your loved ones to an unknown destination; from which all what you can see is just the grave and perishing!

I ask Allāh that He grants us a belief that would protect us from the evils of that day, so we may be patient and accepting of His destiny. We ask the Giver that He grants us from His excess bounties that He bestowed on those whom He loves so that meeting Him would be more beloved to us than staying in this life, and that surrendering to His predestined decree would become more desirable to us over what we choose.

I seek refuge with Allāh from assuming that we have perfect administration of our deeds as this will cause us to resent the destiny whenever things are not going our way.

Truly, this is pure ignorance.

May Allāh protect us from it!

CHAPTER EIGHTY-NINE

True Knowledge of Allāh Will Grant us Happiness in this World and the Hereafter

Nobody will have a better life in this world or the Hereafter than those who know Allāh, Most High. He who knows Him enjoys the affable companionship of His Lord; so when receiving a bounty he knows who bestowed it, and if a bitter misfortune occurs, its taste becomes sweet in his mouth. If he asks His Lord for something and does not have it answered, his wish becomes consistent with what Allāh decrees for him because he knows that is better for him and he trusts His good administration.

The description of such a person is that his heart (*qalb*) is always mindful of his Lord; he stands before Him and sees Him with the eye of certainty because the blessings of knowing Him disciplined his limbs when it flowed through them.

> 'If I speak then I do not speak of anything other than You,
> And if I am silent then it is You I am contemplating.'

If a person who knows his Lord is exposed to harm, he looks away from the cause and only sees the Creator of the cause. This is why he maintains a wonderful relation with Him.

If he is silent then he is thinking about performing His rights upon himself and if he speaks he says what pleases Him. His heart is never attached to a wife, children or anyone else; and he interacts with people physically [as his heart is devoted to Allāh alone], but his soul is with the Owner of his soul.

Such a person has no concerns in this life and does not feel distressed when departing this world or feels loneliness in his grave, and he is safe from all troubles on the Day of Resurrection.

As for he who has no knowledge of his Lord, then he is always tripping. He is always stressed because of the trials he's being tested with as he does not know the Tester. He feels bad when not achieving his goals because he does not know what is best for him.

He only feels company with people of his kind because he has no knowledge of his Lord. He fears his departure from this life because he neither has any provision to sustain him in his journey nor aware of the path he ought to embark.

Many are those among both scholars and ascetic whose knowledge about their Lord is equivalent to the knowledge of an idle layman has about his Lord!

And many are those among laypeople whose knowledge about their Lord is vaster than both, scholars and ascetics ever had despite their endeavours.

All of these are gifts and shares that Allāh divided among His creation.

ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ ٱللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ

"That is the Grace of Allāh which He bestows on whom He wills."

[*al-Mā'idah* (5):54]

CHAPTER NINETY

Abstinence from Sins Leads to Basking in Honour

O you, whose status is elevated with piety (*taqwā*), do not sell the honour you have received with the humiliation of sins (*maʿāṣī*)! Try to persevere from the thirst of lust (*hawā*) during the heat of desire no matter how hot it gets and how much pain you must endure! If your patience (*ṣabr*) reaches its ultimate level (*maqām*), be reasonable and say [to yourself]: This is the status of people who if they swear, trusting Allāh for something, Allāh would fulfil their oath.

Anas Ibn Al-Nadīr (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) persevered a lot in abandoning his desires. It is him whose endeavours manifested in the words of his oath when he said: 'If Allāh let me live to witness a battle, He will see what I will do.' On the day of the battle of Uhud, he fought to the point when he was found dead, all his body was deformed from sustained sword injuries and his body could only be identified from the tip of his finger. Indeed was it not for his high endeavours, he would have not sworn to Allāh to be that courageous when he spoke his oath! How could that not be him when he swore by Allāh, the tooth of Al-Rabīʿ will not be broken, and Allāh fulfilled his oath.[123]

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[123] Bukhārī, #2703 and Muslim, #1675

For Allāh's sake! I ask you to taste the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of abstaining from that which He forbade for it is a tree that blooms fruits honouring this life and the Hereafter.

Once your thirst for what you desire becomes severe, then stretch the fingers of hope (*rajā'*) to reach out to He who will quench your thirst completely, and say, '[O Allāh] the endurance of the 'self' is about to expire in these years of drought, so I beseech You to hasten the year in which I will receive aid and juice of my fruits.'

For Allāh's sake! I ask you to think about those who spent most of their life fearing Allāh, yet when they were subjected to a test towards the end of their life, their boat crashed on the rocks of the valley at the time they supposed to rise above!

Woe to this life—and even to heaven (*jannah*)[124] if gaining it will cause the Beloved (Allāh) to turn away from us!

A layperson is called by his name and his father's name. As for people with a high status, their titles precede their names and their fathers' names.

Tell me: 'Who are you?'
'What have you done?'
'To what level has your status reached?'

O you who cannot refrain for a moment from that which he lusts!

For Allāh's sake! Do you know what a man is? A true man is he who finds himself alone with sins, and has the power to commit them and his lusts urges him to quench its thirst, but he thinks about

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[124] This is a form of exaggeration known in Arabic language to emphasise the importance of a particular point and not addressing the exaggerated example.

Allāh looking at him, so he feels embarrassed from angering Him and thus his desire goes away.

But it seems that you only abandon things that you do not have desire for, or things that are not desirable in the first place, or even things that you are unable to have! This is your habit! If you give charity then you only give a small piece of bread that is not even suitable for you to eat, unless there were people around to praise you.

Nay! By Allāh! You will not earn the high rank and be among Allāh's *awliyā'* unless your actions are purely for His sake; therefore you must abandon what you like and desire, and persevere over things you dislike—all the while realising that you are a hired worker and the sun has not yet set for you to receive your reward; only if you wish to honour this contract.

If your love for Allāh is sincere and true, you will find this to be minimal (you can do) when compared to the pleasure you will receive from the One you love. None of the words I have mentioned above are intended to address the sinners.

CHAPTER NINETY-ONE

Submission of Intellect

I noticed that the human mind seeks to know all of Allāh's wisdom. In many cases however, the intellect of a person might not understand some of this wisdom, such as why Allāh demolishes what He builds, so he remains wondering!

The devil might even take advantage of this opportunity (*fursa*) and whisper (*wawasa*) to him, 'Where is the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) behind this?'

I say to this poor person to beware from being fooled! It has been demonstrated to you with no doubt the wisdom of the Maker through the perfection of all that He made.

That being the case, if some wisdom is not clear to you, then it is because of your lack of understanding.

It is the norm that kings always maintain secrets; so O weak man, who do you think yourself to be to know all of Wisdom of the Most Wise?

It suffices you to be aware of the generality of His Wisdom and not all the details!

Beware from delving into what is beyond your intellect and capacities for you are just one atom from His creation, so how is it you may judge the One who created you!

His Wisdom has been established for you through His ruling and ownership; so utilise your intellect to view what is within your capacity and you will be amazed!

Look away from that which is hidden from you because a person whose sight is weak ought not to look straight into the sun.

CHAPTER NINETY-TWO

Discipline of the Self by Wisdom and Resolute

Overcoming the desires of the *'self'* (*mujahidat-ul-nafs*) is one of the amazing matters for it needs a unique method.

Some people allow their *'self'* to indulge in all that it wants, so it makes them fall into what they dislike. Others have exaggerated in opposing their 'self' until they prevent it from its rights and are unjust towards it, compromising their worship accordingly.

Some have not fed it properly so their bodies become too weak to fulfil its obligations. Others have made the *'self'* live in solitude (*khalwa*) until it becomes socially disoriented and causing it to miss out on obligations or virtues such as visiting a sick person, or being good to the neighbour or indeed one's own mother.

A resolute person is he whose *'self'* knows his high endeavours and his effort to preserve the principles; hence when he allows it to enjoy the lawful, it does not dare try stepping beyond the lines.

Such a person deals with his *'self'* similar to a king who jokes with his soldiers without losing poise. This is also the case of the righteous who give their 'selves' its rights, and enable them perform necessary duties.

CHAPTER NINETY-THREE

Time is like a Sword, if You Do not Cut It, It Will Cut You

I noticed that the vast majority of people deal with time (*zamān*) in a strange way: If the night is long, they spend it in useless talk, or in reading novels. If the day is long, they spend most of it sleeping and hanging out on the banks of the Tigris River or staying in the markets. I find their example similar to some people on a sailing ship without realising that since they are too busy having vain discussions.

I have found few people who understood the meaning of [their] existence; they spend their times acquiring the needed supplies and always preparing for the journey they are about to embark (after death).

Their endeavours differ however based on their level of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and the size of their investment in the land they are departing to (in the Hereafter).

Those who are alert and awake look for worthy matters that matter in the afterlife and pack a lot of them so that their profit increases.

And those oblivious take with them whatever's unnecessary as they could not care less; they might even travel without a guard [i.e. knowledge]; hence when confronted with thieves they are deprived of all what they have, and end up finding themselves broke.

Take advantage of the seasons of your life and do not waste time! Use knowledge (*'ilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*) as guides. Race the time by taking advantage of it; and hold your 'selves' accountable and take a lot of good deeds to survive your journey for indeed death is about to knock on your doors.

CHAPTER NINETY-FOUR

The Errs of Scholars (*'ulamā'*) and Ascetics (*zuhhād*)

The worse thing for an ill person is eating too many different kinds of foods and there is no one in this world except that he is inflicted with the disease of lust (*hawā*). Dieting (*himya*) therefore (abstaining from complying with our unlawful lusts) is the best medicine we can take otherwise gluttony will elongate the illness.

The ones who are worried about the Hereafter and err as a result of not dieting (from over-indulgence) are of two types:

- The first type is scholars (*takhlīt al-'ulamā'*) who accompany their opponents, such as the rulers who weaken their level of certainty [in Allāh]; the more time they spend with their opponents the more their credibility becomes compromised among their students and followers. It is like if I were to see a doctor who consumes harmful food and yet advises me to eat healthy; I would become either doubtful or suspicious about him.
- The second type is ascetic people who err (*takhlīt al-zuhhād*) when they start mixing with people whose focus is on worldly

affairs and pleasures, or when pretending to be humble in order to gain people's love.

Be mindful of Allāh for He is the One who measures rewards and is the All-Seeing. Sincerity lies inwardly (*ikhlāṣ fi'l-bāṭin*), honesty lies in the heart (*ṣidq fi'l-qalb*) and the best path for safety (*ṭarīq al-salāma*) is to conceal (*sitr*) one's self.

CHAPTER NINETY-FIVE

Reaping the Fruit of Knowledge after Acting upon It

I have met many Sheikhs of different degrees with varying states of condition and levels of knowledge (*muqādir fi'l-ʿilm*). The most beneficial of them were those acting upon their knowledge, even if others were more knowledgeable than them.

I have seen many ḥadīth scholars who memorised and knew many narrations. But they used to tolerate backbiting and justify their action in the name of the science of *'jarḥ wa taʿdīl'* (discrediting and crediting). They used to get paid for narrating reports and traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ), and hasten to answer questions so that their status be maintained in the eyes of people, even if their answers were wrong.

On the other hand, I met ʿAbdu'l-Wahhāb Al-Anmāṭī. He was on the way of the righteous predecessors; no backbiting ever occurred in his gatherings, and he never used to ask money for narrating ḥadīth. Whenever I used to read from the books of heart-softeners to him he used to cry continuously.

At that time I was still a young man and his rolling tears affected me a lot, building in my heart profound foundations. He was just like the scholars who we hear about.

I also met Shaikh Abū Manṣūr Al-Jawālīqī. He was silent most of the time and extremely cautious about the words coming out of his mouth.

He was one of the masters and a renowned exegete, but if he is ever asked a question, even if it is too simple that even his novice students can answer, he would take his time until he is certain of his answer. He also used to fast a lot and remain silent for long periods.

I have truly benefited from meeting these two people more than anyone else that I have met. This made me realise that leading by example is more eloquent than verbal directions.

On the other hand, I have seen some Sheikhs who spend their private time in joking and laxity; hence the hearts of people became less attached to them and their slackness wasted all the knowledge they had acquired. This made people benefit less from their knowledge (*ʿilm*) during their lives, and made them to be forgotten after their death. Hardly does anyone look at their writings.

So act upon what you know for it is the most greatest of all principles. Truly, a poor person is he who wasted his life in knowledge that he did not act upon afterwards; thus he missed out on worldly pleasures (*ladhāt*) and on the goodness (*khayrāt*) of the Hereafter.

Not only does he stand up broke (*muflis*) on the Day of Judgement, but the evidence established against him is also too strong.

CHAPTER NINETY-SIX

Allāh postpones Punishing the Sinners

Glory be to the Almighty King. He who knows Him fears Him, and never trusts that His wrath many never escape him.

I have pondered upon a great thing—that being: Allāh postpones [punishing] sinners to the point that it appears as if He will not punish them, making sinners ever loose in committing sins as if there is nothing to stop them. Yet if they become excessive and their intellects do not stop them (from sinning), then He takes them out like an overpowering deity does.

This postponement (*imhāl*) was only to test patient people and to make oppressors increase in oppression—so that the patient continues to be firm in his patience (*ṣabr al-ṣābir*) and the oppressor (*ẓālim*) is punished for his bad deeds though despite all that, there is a lot of Divine forbearance (*ḥilm*) and tolerance imbedded in all of this that we do not know of.

Once He punishes someone for his sin, you will see that each mistake will have a consequence or He may punish him for all his sins all together.

Perhaps people do not know the reason for the punishment of a person, so they say: 'That person is a good man so why did this happen to him?' Allāh's decree responds: 'These are duly punishments for hidden sins and it is the time for him to collect his punishment.'

So glory be to Him who manifests Himself as if He is never concealed, and conceals Himself as if He is unknown, and postpones the punishment until people become hopeful of His forgiveness, and interrogates mankind for all that they did to the point that minds become bemused of His questioning about every detail.

Indeed, there is no power or strength except with Allāh.

CHAPTER NINETY-SEVEN

Adhering to Wisdom when Dealing with People

I had thought deeply about seeking (religious) knowledge and busying myself with it. I found that it fortifies the heart (*qalb*) that causes it to become rigid. Were it not for the strong hope and strength of the heart, no one would busy himself with seeking knowledge.

I write a ḥadīth hoping to narrate it, and I start writing a book hoping to complete it; but when I pondered upon the acts of worship, hope dwindles, the heart becomes soft, the tears start to flow, tranquillity descends and invoking Allāh in secret becomes sweet. It is as if I enter the state of being mindful of Allāh in all of my conditions.

Knowledge is better however, stronger in proof and higher in status despite the negative effect of knowledge that I have previously mentioned.

As for devoting oneself for worship—despite the benefits I previously mentioned about it—it is for lazy cowards who are sufficed with mending their own affairs rather than guiding others, and so they seclude themselves instead of bringing people closer to their Lord.

Notwithstanding, you should know that the right thing to do is to seek knowledge while exposing your heart to what softens it in a way that does not distract you from perfecting seeking knowledge.

Given the fragility (*ḍa'f*) and softness (*riqq*) of my heart, I do dislike letting my 'self' visit graves or be in the company of dying people, because this influences my mind and takes me away from the sphere of seeking knowledge to the sphere of thinking (*maqām al-fikr*) about death (*mawt*), and so become neutralised; not being of benefit for a while.

The veritable statement to be made in handling this issue is that a disease must be treated with its opposite: He whose heart is rigid or hard (*qāsiya shadīd al-qaswa*) and is not mindful of Allāh (*muraqaba*) enough to keep him away from falling into error; ought to treat this with remembering death and visiting people on their deathbeds.

And he whose heart is too soft (*shadīd al-riqq*), then that is enough a worry to address; therefore he should occupy himself with what makes him overcome the effect his soft heart has on him, so he can take benefit from his life and understand the rulings he gives.

Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) used to joke,[125] and used to race 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*)[126] and used to be kind to himself.

He who follows the Prophet's (ﷺ) way will understand the point that I am making with regards to taking care of one's self and treating it gently.

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[125] Tirmidhī, #1990, *Musnad* Aḥmad , 2/340, 360. Tirmidhī said the ḥadīth is ḥasan—on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

[126] Abū Dāwūd, #2578, Ibn Mājah,#1979 and *Musnad* Aḥmad, 6/264. See Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd on the authority of 'Ā'ishsh (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*)

CHAPTER NINETY-EIGHT

Death Is the Best Admonisher

One of the most interesting things is the awakening a person experiences while on his deathbed. At that stage he becomes very alert and frustrated on a level that is beyond imagination; he starts regretting his past and wishing that his death is postponed to make up for what he missed and to make sincere repentance for he is certain of his death, so his remorse almost kills him even before he is dead.

If this state of attentiveness and awakening occurred while a person is enjoying youth and health, then he would have achieved all the objectives of righteous actions.

An intelligent person should nevertheless, envision the moment of his death and then act accordingly. If he is unable to envision the moment as it is in reality, he should (at least) imagine it as per his level of awakening for it will surely repel blameworthy desires and entice praiseworthy endeavours.

As for those who always thinks about the moment of death, they will become captive to it just like the case of Ḥabīb Al-ʿAjmī who used to say to his wife every morning, 'If I were to die today, then let so and so wash me, and so and so carry me [to my grave].'

A man told Ma'rūf Al-Karkhī, 'I am willing to lead you in the Ẓuhr [prayer], but I may not be able to do so in the 'Aṣr [prayer].' So Ma'rūf replied, 'What makes you certain that you will live until 'Aṣr [prayer]? I seek refuge with Allāh from having such high hopes (*tul al-aml*)'

A man degraded another man behind his back in Ma'rūf's presence, so he said to the man: 'Remember the cotton that they will put on your eyes (when preparing you for burial)!'

CHAPTER NINETY-NINE

Everything Reminds the Awakened One of Allāh

Those who are awake may recite or hear a line of poetry and benefit from an insinuation that he finds in it.

Al-Junayd said, Sarī [al-Saqtī] handed me a piece of paper with the following written on it, 'While I am on my way to Makkah, which Allāh honoured and glorified, I heard a camel-chanter recite:

I cry, and you know not what is causing me to cry,
I cry out of fear that you might leave me,
and that you cut my rope and abandon me.

It is worthy that you, may Allāh bestows His Mercy and success upon you, to see how these lines effected Sarī so much so that he wanted to share it with Al-Junayd, and indeed only a person like Al-Junayd is suitable to be shown such lines of poetry [as he will reflect on it with respect to his own relationship with Allāh].

Some people's nature is rigid and sense of understanding is slow, so when they hear this poetry they object and comment what do these words refer to? If it was meant to refer to Allāh, Most High, then no feminine nouns must be used to refer to Him, and if it was meant to refer to a woman, then what kind of austere attitude is that!

Indeed, this is the understanding of the heedless who would misapprehend this kind of words! This is why people are not permitted to listen to poetry and words of singers because in most cases, people tend to understand such words in reference to self-desires and whims. It is rare to find today people like Al-Junayd and Sarī who were aware (and took heed) of the nuance meanings that can be found in words.

The objection of those whose nature is rigid and thus can neither relate to nor reflect on what they hear or see in this life, is responded to by saying, 'Neither did Sarī reflect because of his taking the face value of these words nor attempted to use the exact words in reference to Allāh!

Rather, the meaning of such words is what triggered his reflection and made him think of his own relation with Allāh.

It is as if he wanted to say—after hearing the lines talking about the anxiety of a man who fears to be departed from the one he loves—'O Allāh, I cry lest You turn away from me!'

He did not think of the masculine and feminine nouns used in the words he heard since such words only reminded him to reflect his relationship with Allāh, so do take heed to this!

Whoever has his heart and mind awakened will always continue to benefit from such poems and folk tales.

I read a story written by Ibn 'Aqīl in which he narrates a story about one of his primary teachers who once heard a woman reciting the following lines of poetry:

I spent all night washing his clothes,
I spent all day scrubbing his clothes,
He left the house and stared at another woman,
He slipped and fell in the mud.

Upon hearing these words, he reflected on this poetry and applied the concept in these words to the relationship between Allāh and humans; he came to think as if Allāh is saying to mankind, 'O my slaves! I have created you in good form, mended your affairs and structured you delicately, yet you have turned to other than me; hence observe the result of your disobedience!'

Ibn 'Aqīl also said, I heard a woman recites the following lines, which made me stay in distress for a while:

I have always told you that slackness shall have a consequence
The vile has yeast that will manifest afterwards

Truly, we will be shamed on the Day of Judgement for what we have been slack about in this life as such slackness will manifest on that Day before Allāh, Most High.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED

Avoid the Doubtful

I was able to attain some worldly pleasures by resorting to some concessions that religion allows in certain situations. Yet whenever I used to gain something this way, I felt that I lost a piece of my heart and every time the pathway to such a gain is lit, then darkness settles inside my heart.

I told my *'self'*: 'O evil self! Sins scratch the heart leaving scares on it (*al-ithm hawāz al-qulūb*).'[127]

And Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Seek the advice of your heart"[128] hence nothing in this world is worthy if acquiring it makes the heart disturbed.

Should acquiring paradise (*jannah*) require one to compromise his religion or negatively affect one's relation with his Lord, it will not be enjoyable (*ladha*)! It is better to sleep in landfills while having a heart free of disturbance (*salāmal-qalb*), than to lie down on kings' couches.

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[127] Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, 9/8744 —see *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Targhib*, #1907.

[128] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 4/228

I continually strive to overcome my *'self'* but while sometimes I manage to overcome it, at other times it overcomes me further claiming that it must gain what it cannot stay without and argues that it does not go beyond what is permissible.

But I respond, 'Is it not better to avoid such gain out of piety?'
It replies, 'Yes it is true.'
Then I say, 'Does not gaining what you want cause the heart to harden?'

And it agrees with me on this and so I reply to it that thus therefore is no good in such gain.

Once I was sitting alone and contemplating to my *'self'*, 'Woe to you! Listen attentively as I have something to say to you! If you were to gain some worldly benefit through doubtful means, are you certain you will live long enough to spend it?'

My *'self'* responded, 'No!'

So I said, 'It is then a calamity that someone else ends up having it, all the while you only get the immediate trouble and the punishment that you cannot guarantee your safety from. Woe to you! Refrain from such dealings that piety directs you to leave for the sake of Allāh! You seem to want to refrain only from what is a sin or not correct. Haven't you heard of the ḥadīth?: "Whoever leaves something for Allāh's sake, He will give him something better instead."[129]

Why don't you learn a lesson from people who gathered wealth, yet it was their heirs who took it eventually?

Why do you not take heed from how people hope for some things but never live long enough to achieve them? There are many scholars who have collected many books but never benefited from them, yet some people only have ten volumes and benefit abundantly from them. There are many people who live happily while only owning two Dinārs, and others are depressed while having piles of wealth.

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[129] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 5/363

Do you not have the wit to notice the state of those who resort to concessions? When they opt for a concession in one matter they become deprived of many things. It happens that when the house owner becomes sick, he spends multiples of what he had gained through concessions; on treatment. Indeed, the one who abstained from delving into this is safe.

This made my *'self'* become annoyed with much of the blame I threw at it and said, 'If I do not transgress against the orders of religion then what is it that you want from me?'

I responded, 'I do not want you to be fooled as you already know what is in your heart!' It said, 'Tell me what I should do.'

I said, 'You should be mindful of Him Who always sees you for you are [all the time] in the presence of the Great King Who knows your inner self more than what those who praise you can see from you.'

Be on the side of safety and beware of opting for religious concessions to sell your piety and certainty for the sake of your rash desires. If your nature endures a hardship because of that, then say to yourself, 'Behold! It is not yet over, and Allāh will guide you to the best of decisions, and will aid you with assistance.'

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-ONE

The Divine Punishment

I often hear news of some esteemed people from society assuming high positions that they drink alcohol, commits sins in public, oppress people and other crimes that deserve punishment in religion.

I remain thinking when will the time come that these crimes be established against them so they receive the prescribed punishment?

And if this ever happens, who will dare to establish the punishment against them? It is something I believe will not happen because of their high positions in this worldly life.

I continued to wonder about how the set punishments are not being applied until I saw them being inflicted with catastrophic events over and over again.

So in return for their oppression, their wealth was taken away from them. They were imprisoned and humiliated and even killed as a recompense for what they had committed. I then realised that Allāh never forgets anything! So beware, for punishment is always near!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWO

The Reality of Asceticism: Abstention due to Piety and Reliance

For a person to exert his power in all that benefits him is deemed a logical and religious necessity; preserving (*hifẓ*) his wealth, seeking its increase and growth is required. For wealth is the reason whereby a person maintains his survival. Allāh has forbidden us from wastefulness: Allāh said,

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا۟ ٱلسُّفَهَآءَ أَمْوَٰلَكُمُ ٱلَّتِى جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَٰمًا

> "And give not unto the foolish your property which Allāh has made a means of support for you."
>
> [*al-Nisā'* (4):5]

and

وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ ٱلْبَسْطِ

> "nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach."
>
> [*al-Isrā'* (17):29]

and

وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾

"But spend not wastefully."
[*al-Isrā'* (17):26]

and

وَٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَنفَقُوا۟
لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا۟ وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا۟ وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

"And those, who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes)."
[*al-Furqān* (25):67]

It is a virtue of wealth (*faḍila al-māl*) that Allāh said in the Qur'ān,

مَّن ذَا ٱلَّذِى يُقْرِضُ ٱللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا

"Who is he that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan."
[*al-Baqarah* (2):245]

and

وَأَنفِقُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ

"And spend in the Cause of Allāh."
[*al-Baqarah* (2):195],

and

ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَٰلَهُمْ

"those who spend their wealth."
[*al-Baqarah* (2):261],

and

لَا يَسْتَوِى مِنكُم مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ ٱلْفَتْحِ

"Not equal among you are those who spent and fought

> before the conquering (of Makkah)"
>
> [*al-Ḥadīd* 57:10].

He also regarded wealth as a bounty (*ni'ma*) and giving it away to the poor is a way of cleansing (*taṭhīr*) people from their sins, He said,

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا

> "Take alms from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it."
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (9):103].

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The best money is [when] it is possessed by a good man",[130] and said, "There is no money that benefited me as much as did the money of Abū Bakr."[131]

The Prophet (ﷺ) did not mind Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) leaving him to go on business journeys, and 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, "I would rather to die between two mountains while seeking sustenance [that saves my face] than to die fighting for Allāh's cause."

Many Companions were merchants. Sa'īd Ibn Al-Mūsāyyib, one of the senior second generation (*tabi'īn*), was an oil merchant and the only oil importer who left behind a lot of wealth; and such was the life of the righteous predecessors (*salaf*).

A calamity such as illness may occur and to overcome it one needs money; hence if one does not have money, he finds himself obligated to endeavour to earn this money from anywhere. So he might resort to abandoning his religion or honour for its sake. In fact a person feels physically stronger when he has wealth, which according to doctors is considered a form of medication; wisdom placed in humans by the All-Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*).

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[130] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 4/197

[131] *Musnad* Aḥmad, 2/253

But later on, a new group of people emerged who sought comfort, idleness and justified this by claiming they have true reliance on Allāh and said, we neither possess anything nor take supplies when travelling for the sustenance to the bodies will come somehow.

This practice is evidently against the teachings and principles of religion for Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) forbade us from wasting money[132] and when Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) travelled to meet Al-Khidr, he took food with him,[133] as did our Prophet (ﷺ) when he immigrated to Madīnah.[134] What is more eloquent and sufficient evidence is what Allāh said in Qur'ān,

وَتَزَوَّدُواْ فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ ٱلزَّادِ ٱلتَّقْوَىٰ

> "And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best provision is piety."
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):197]

Despite all these authentic textual evidences, this group of Ṣūfīs claim to dislike this world all the while not really understanding what ought to be disliked. They consider gaining more wealth to be a vile act and a form of greed.

They have in general, innovated a way that includes some monasticism. If their intention were truthful in using asceticism as a means to achieve worldly pleasures; they referred to the wealth they attained from people as *"divine grace"*!

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[132] Bukhārī, #2408 and Muslim, #593

[133] See *Surah al-Kahf* (18):62

[134] Bukhārī, #3905

Ibn Qutaybah explained *"the upper hand"* mentioned in the ḥadīth to be *"the donating hand."* Then he said, 'I wonder at those who claim it is "the hand that receives [money and gifts] from others. I believe these are people who are lazy and enjoy begging; hence they justify their lowness because without doubt, all religions are free from such claims.'

It was reported that Prophets Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) and Lūṭ (*'alayhi as-salām*) had to leave the towns they both lived in due to the large number of cattle they had.

And, Shu'ayb was an affluent man but still he wished to have a better deal from Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) when he said to him, as stated in the Qur'ān,

أَن
تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَٰنِيَ حِجَجٍ فَإِنْ أَتْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِندِكَ

"You serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be [as a favour] from you."

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* (28):27]

Ibn 'Aqīl said, 'Whoever says I dislike this worldly life is a liar because when the sons of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) asked him to let his favoured son Benjamin accompany them, he said,

هَلْ ءَامَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ

"Should I entrust you with him..."

[*Yūsuf* (12):64]

and they replied:

أَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ

"...and obtain an increase of a camel's load."

[*Yūsuf* (12):65]

Some of the righteous predecessors said, 'He who claims that he dislikes worldly things is a liar until proven he is truthful about what he claims. If he is proven to be truthful, then he is crazy.'

The Ṣūfīs have discouraged many people to work, earn wealth and they make them feel that work and wealth are oddities. Although this has been the way of Prophets and righteous people.

The reality is that they sought comfort and preferred to sit and wait to receive their alleged "*divine grace*". Thus, if they ate and became full they start to dance, and when they digest the food, they eat again. And if they had influence over a rich man, they would trick him and make him to invite them to his home—justifying this on the grounds it is either to praise Allāh or to seek Allāh's forgiveness.

However, the worst of all that is their claim that this is a practice bringing them closer to Allāh! It has been established as a matter of consensus among all scholars that whoever claims dancing is a way to draw oneself closer to Allāh, has disbelieved.

If Ṣūfīs say that dancing is merely permissible, this would have been more tolerable because it is religion that determines what brings you closer to Allāh, and it does not claim that dancing is such an act.

I was told that some Ṣūfīs used to light candles and stare at the faces of beardless youth! If someone inquires about their reasons, they would mock the inquirer and say to ponder upon Allāh's creation.

Nay, the devil has taken control of them and is leading them to where he pleases. They do not even have the strong will of the Prophet (ﷺ) who made the young man to sit in the back behind him and said, "The test of Prophet Dāwūd was due to a look."[135]

It is also strange how they condemn this world, yet they eat until they are full without investigating the source of the food they are given. The pious people from the righteous predecessors were careful about the source of their food.

Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham used to spend some time at night thinking with whom they should do business with the next day.

And Sarī Al-Saqatī was known of eating from only lawful sources and his high level of piety (*wara'*) is famous.

Later on, some people emerged calling themselves Ṣūfīs and claim they follow the steps of the aforementioned masters, and yet they eat from unlawful sources and say: "We have been given our provision!"

I wonder at these type of people! They neither mind the sources from which their food comes nor suppress their desires, nor reduce their indulgence and the place they made for purpose of worship is never empty of food! They do not spend a night in solitude to worship; and accept money though they know the unlawfulness of this money.

They continue visiting the public baths [where the 'Awrah of people is exposed] while singer sings for them playing the tambour that has some hoops attached to it. Their company plays the clarinet and they hear love poetry about Layla and Su'dā while beardless youth are present carrying candles. Then after all of this, they condemn this world.

Tell me: 'Who is manipulating the people more than these individuals?' I say, 'he who is fooled by them is worse than them.'

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[135] *Musannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*, 7/91/34239—It is a fabrication—see *al-Da'īfah*, #313

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THREE-TWO

The Wonders of Allāh's Signs

While I was on my way to *hajj*, I and the people with me were worried that the desert Bedouins might attack us. We therefore took the route through Khaybar, upon which I saw huge mountains and natural pathways that blew my mind and made my appreciation of Allāh's Greatness increase in my heart. I sensed Allāh's greatness here more than any other place.

So I rebuked my '*self*', 'Woe to you!' [If this is amazes you then] go to the sea and contemplate its greatness. You will see greater wonders than this. Look then at the universe and all the heavens and orbits, you will find that it is just like an atom in a desert.

Then let your thoughts roam around the orbits of planets and circulate around the Throne (*'arsh*) and heed to what is in the heavens and hell. Then detach yourself from everything and direct your attention to Him as then you will see all that is grasped within the fist of the Almighty whose ability has no limits.

Look then at yourself, think of your beginning and your end. Think about what you were prior to your beginning; you were non-existent and think about yourself after death, where there will only be dirt.

How could anyone feel comfortable with this existence while viewing the beginning and the end through the eye of his intellect? And how could those whose hearts are mindful, forget remembering their great Lord?

By Allāh! If people were to wake up from the intoxication of their desires they would melt out of fear of Him or would dwell into loving Him.

Yet mankind is often overpowered by its attachment to tangible objects; hence people glorify Allāh and His Capacity when seeing a mountain. If the wit of a person contemplates the meaning intended, His Capacity and Ability will direct us to Him more than it would have the evidence of the mountain.

Glory to He who made most people occupied with their affairs instead of the purpose of their creation!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FOUR

Endure Calamities while Supplicating

Allāh, Most High, determines when calamities will end; therefore an inflicted person must bear patiently until a calamity is over! If a person becomes anxious before the time of calamity ends, his anxiety will not help him just like how an object rolls downward, it does not go upward. Thus patience (*ṣabr*) is obligated (*wājib*) until the difficulty disappears.

Hoping for the calamity to end soon while knowing that it has a set time does not work. Patience (*ṣabr*) is a must, yet without accompanying it with supplication (*du'ā'*), it will not have the desired effect. He who supplicates should not hasten but rather continue to worship with patience (*ṣabr*), invocation (*du'ā'*) and wholly surrender (*taslīm*) to the Wise One (*al-Ḥakīm*).

Moreover, one should abandon the causes (*sabab*) of the calamity (*balā'*), which is usually a form of punishment (for one's sins).

As for whoever hastens and becomes impatient (*muta'jil*), is in fact transgressing against the One Who arranges the affairs (*mudbir*) of this world and this is deviation from the state of his servitude (*'ubudiyya*) to his Lord. The supreme state (*maqām al-'ala'*) is when he is pleased (*riḍā*) with what He predestined and decreed for him.

Patience is necessary and avoiding the harm with excessive supplication is best of resorts; objection is sinful and being hasty (*ista'jāl*) is a form of transgression against the arrangement of the Wise.

Understand these points for they will mitigate the calamity.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIVE

Things that Assist in Practising Patience (*ṣabr*)

Nothing is more difficult in this life than maintaining patience (*ṣabr*), be it patience for not acquiring what you love or being patient when afflicted with difficulties—especially when patience stretches for long periods of time or when people become desperate for relief (*farj*).

It is therefore required a person to have enough supplies to help him travel through the journey. Types of such supplies vary, some of which require contemplating the amount of hardship and thinking how much worse it could have been; knowing that there are more severe level of hardships than yours such as the calamity of losing a parent or a child and so forth; hoping to be replaced with a better situation in this life, and thinking of the reward in the Hereafter; appreciating the praise (*madḥ*) that people will accord for your patience and the reward that awaits from Allāh; knowing that packing and becoming alarmed does not help the situation but rather makes it scandalous.

There are many other types of supplies that the mind (*fakr*) and intellect (*'aql*) can come up with. For these supplies are the only things that can be of use during the journey of patience, that a patient person ought to occupy himself with during his trials and calamity.

For indeed the destination has come near.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIX

The Wisdom of Postponement of Supplication (*duʿā'*)

He who falls into hardship and supplicates (*duʿā'*) for ease must not suspect or despair should his supplications not be answered.

This is because he is supplicating to The Wise Owner, so if He chooses not to answer the supplication then He is free to do whatever He wants with what He owns. And if He chooses to delay answering the supplication then it is because of His wisdom.

Therefore whoever objects to His Decision in his heart (*qalb*) is rebelling against his status as His slave and akin to demanding to be in the position of the ones who deserve!

You ought to know that whatever Allāh has chosen for him is better than what he would choose for himself—for he might pray for a drop that consequently becomes a torrent that takes him away!

It is reported that a man used to ask Allāh to facilitate for him join-ing a battle to fight for His sake. He then heard a voice saying: 'If you were to fight in the battle you will fall captive, and if you become a captive then you will become a Christian.'

When the servant (*ʿabd*) of Allāh submits to His Wisdom and Judgment and has full certainty that He owns everything, he will feel comfort in his heart regardless of his supplication being answered or not.

Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "When a Muslim supplicates to Allāh, Most High, then Allāh will either: hasten to answer his supplication in this life or delay His answer, or preserve it for him in the Hereafter."[136]

Perhaps a person on the Day of Judgment will wish that none of his supplications were answered in this life, and they were preserved for him in the Hereafter.

So comprehend these things and safeguard your heart from doubt and hastiness.

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[136] Tirmidhī, #3968, *Musnad* Aḥmad, 3/18—on the authority of Abū hurayrah (*raḍiy Allāhu ʿanhu*)—see *Ṣaḥiḥ Adab al-Mufrad*, #710

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVEN

Scholars Who Act upon Knowledge are Closest to Allāh

If He who wishes to know the advantage of scholars (*‘ulamā’*) over people of asceticism (*zuhhād*). Then let him look at the virtue of the Angels Jibreel and Mikā’eel, over the Angels whom Allāh assigned to look after things pertaining to the creation, and the rest of Angels who are devoted only to worship (*ta‘abbud*) just like how monks (*rahabān*) dedicate themselves to worship in a monastery.

The former Angels were brought closer (*taqrīb*) to Allāh as per the knowledge they have with regards to Allāh. Therefore if they notice the Angel of revelation is carrying some revelation to deliver, the dwellers of heavens (*ahlu’l-samā’*) become anxious until they are informed of the revelation,

وَلَا تَنفَعُ ٱلشَّفَٰعَةُ عِندَهُۥٓ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُۥ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن
قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا۟ مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا۟ ٱلْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَلِىُّ ٱلْكَبِيرُ

“Until when fear is banished from their (Angels’) hearts,

> they (Angels) say: 'What is it that your Lord has said?' They say: 'The truth. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.'"
>
> [*Sabā'* (34):23]

Likewise, when an ascetic (*zāhid*) hears a ḥadīth he consults a scholar (*'alim*) to explain its authenticity and meaning for him.

Glory is to Him who favoured some people with qualities that make them superior in virtue from their own kind! Indeed no quality is more virtuous (*ashraf*) than knowledge (*'ilm*) to favour someone with, for it placed Adam in a higher rank since he possessed more of it and so made Angels prostrate to him; when Angels had less knowledge than Adam, they were the ones that prostrated.

This is because the closest people to Allāh are the scholars.

It is not knowledge per se that is beneficial but rather what it entails that matters: The essence of knowledge is obtained through acquiring knowledge for the sake of acting upon it.

Each time knowledge points at a virtue, the student of knowledge works hard to attain this virtue. And each time knowledge points to something lowly, then the student works hard to avoid it. This is how knowledge reveals its secrets to a person and becomes a road that is easy to walk upon. It becomes like someone holding another by the hand and asking him to hurry.

By contrast, whoever does not act upon his knowledge will never be able to explore its secrets (*sirr*); hence he will end up pulling knowledge instead of knowledge pulling him.

You should comprehend this example and heed to its meaning and purify your intention (*qaṣd*). Otherwise never wonder.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHT

Moderation is the Best of State

You should know that moderation (*ʿitidāl*) is the best state to follow in all situations; thus when we see people increase in being attached to worldly matters and their good deeds have become corrupted, we remind them of death (*mawt*), the grave (*qabr*) and the Hereafter (*al-Ākhira*).

By contrast, if a scholar is always mindful of death and continuously reading or hearing the ḥadīths mentioning the Hereafter, then more of this will not be helpful for him except in the case when he totally stops it.

Rather a scholar who fears Allāh much (*shadīd*) and always mindful of the Hereafter should refrain from discussing death too much so that he can have some hope that helps him to survive.

He should busy himself with writing and doing good deeds or even having children because if he keeps thinking of death then he will gain more harm than good.

Have not you heard about the Prophet (ﷺ) racing 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhā*) and that she won the race once and he won once? He used to joke and keep himself busy [with some worldly affairs].

This is because investigating the essence of everything ruins the body (*badan*) and disturbs the soul (*nafs*).

It is said that Imām Aḥmad asked Allāh, Most High, to make him fear (*kawf*) Him more. After Allāh answered his supplication, Imām Aḥmad feared that he might become crazy because of much fear he had and so asked Allāh to return him to the way he was.

You should contemplate this principle for a person should busy himself with some of the affairs of this life and relax a bit sometimes for that is more beneficial for the self.

And, Allāh is the Provider of Assistance.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINE

The Virtue of Seeking a High Status

When a person focuses in on his thought, it will guide him to seek the most lofty and noble of status. It will make him reject any form of shortcoming. Abū'l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī said (in poetry):

I have not seen a worse fault in people,
than for capable people not to (strive to) be perfect.

An intelligent (*'āqil*) should try to achieve as much he can because if it were possible for humans to fly to the heavens, remaining on earth would be one of the worst deficiencies.

Was becoming a Prophet attainable through hard work (*ijtihād*), those who fall short of attaining it would be of the lowest levels. However, if attaining the highest status is not possible, a person in such case must try to seek what is possible.

Renowned pious people always discussed how the *"self"* (*nafs*) should reach its highest levels of perfection in both knowledge (*'ilm*) and deeds (*'amal*). I will explain this concept in further details to highlight the nuanced meanings of it:

As for physical appearance, a person cannot determine how he looks like since it is beyond his power but he can beautify it. It is therefore not meritorious for an intelligent person to neglect his appearance.

To this end, religion entirely points out to best practises, i.e. it orders us to trim our fingernails, pluck out armpit hair and shave pubic hair. It also forbids us from eating garlic and raw onions [when attending to the prayer] because of the bad odour. A person must therefore try to take these examples mentioned in our religion and apply them at large and try to be as clean and beautiful as possible.

People used to know that the Messenger (ﷺ) was coming from smelling his fragrance as he (ﷺ) was very clean [in his body and clothes] and always avoided everything that may be dirty [his body or clothes].

I do not mean by this to encourage people to become compulsive in their cleanliness; rather I only ask people to be moderate for moderation is praised.

A person then must be gentle with his body as it serves him just as his ride serves him. He should not diminish its strength as it will diminish his own strength accordingly. I do not mean by this to encourage people to eat to the point of burping; rather I ask people to be moderate for the strength of a person is like a running fountain—it benefits its owners and others as well.

That being the case, the words of compulsive ascetics who were extreme in their eating practices to the point of becoming too weak to perform obligations should be discarded because this kind of practise is not from religion, nor reported from the Messenger (ﷺ) or his Companions (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhum*).

They only used to feel hungry if they did not find food, and they used to practice patience whenever it was necessary.

Furthermore, a person must only feed his ride (i.e. body) whatever benefits it for it may happen that a single bite may prevent a person from eating numerous bites.

A person should not consume anything that may harm his body, and rather look for the best of food and drink that can maintain his health.

He must not pay attention to anyone pretending to be ascetic saying, 'you must not let yourself fulfil desires because a person must only investigate the lawfulness and health levels of his food and then take from it the right measures.'

It was not reported that the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhum*) abandoned all the desirable things as those compulsive pretentious people advocate.

They only abandoned such desirables because of suspecting the lawfulness of such desirables or because they were concerned that their 'self' would become accustomed to and seek these desires at all times.

A person must work hard [to earn enough money to sustain himself] and be the upper hand to help people instead of being the lower hand that receives help.

Yet he must not busy himself to the point of becoming unable to seek knowledge; he must seek knowledge to reach the ultimate level of it [i.e. reach the level of *ijtihād*] because *taqlid* is the worst of shortcomings.

If his zeal becomes stronger, it will elevate him to the level at which he can have his own *madhhab* and not follow anyone else's views.

This is because a blind follower (*muqallid*) is like a blind man being led by his leader.[13] He must seek the highest levels of knowing Allāh and working to please Him.

In brief, a person must not abandon a virtue that he is able to acquire because contentment is the character of those with lowly status.

Be a man whose feet are on the ground,
but whose head is in the highest of stars.

If you are able to exceed all scholars and ascetic people then do so for they were men just like you are a man. Those who do not work to better themselves are of weak and low endeavours.

Know that you are in a race with time running out. Do not be apt to indolence because laziness is the reason for missing out on all the virtues. Hard work is the pathway to success and strong lofty endeavours boil inside the heart just as water boils in a kettle. One of the righteous predecessors said (in poetry):

I have no wealth except my generosity;
with it I become alive from nothing.
I am content with the sustenance that is written,
but my zeal has reached high levels.

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[13] The condemned type of *taqlīd* that scholars refer to often in their books is when a person is competent and capable of deducing rulings and yet opt for following the rulings deduced by someone else! It also refers to the type when a competent scholar comes to conclude a ruling but then disregard it for the sake of someone else's view.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TEN

Wealth Maintains the Religion and Worldly Affairs of People

There is nothing better for a scholar than having enough wealth (*māl*) to not be in need (*istighnā'*) of people. Once wealth is added to knowledge (*'ilm*), then perfection (*kamāl*) is attained.

Most scholars were too occupied with seeking knowledge to the point of not earning (a living). Therefore, when they became in need of what their life could not be sustained without, and as their patience (*sabr*) ran out; they unwillingly had to be involved in matters that degraded their rank, even if their involvement was due to a valid interpretation they followed at that time—because avoiding that would have been better for them!

Take the examples of Al-Zuhrī who had to visit the Caliph 'Abdu'l-Mālik Ibn Marwān; Abū 'Ubaydah who had to approach Ṭāhir Ibn Al-Ḥusayn, the army leader; the story of Ibn Abī Al-Dunya who agreed to discipline the children of the Caliph Al Mu'tadid; and Ibn Qutaybah who commenced one of his book with praising the minister of the state.

Many scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and ascetics (*zuhhād*) were living in the shade of well-known oppressors who did so out of interpreting justifying their acts, but they lost parts of their hearts and of their perfect religiousness more than what they gained from this worldly life.

I have also seen some Ṣūfīs and some scholars visiting rulers in the hope of receiving some of what they possess. You find some of them fawning to [oppressive and unjust] rulers while you find others praise them in words that are unlawful to be said. Yet others you find not forbidding the unlawful acts when these rulers commit them and so forth. All of this is caused by poverty (*faqr*) and need, so to this effect I came to conclude that the perfection of self-respect and being far from the state of fawning and pretension can only be attained by being far from oppressors.

Those who managed to reach this level of safety [aside from the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhum*)] are one of two types:

Those who had wealth such as Saʿīd Ibn Al-Musayyab who was a merchant buying and selling oil and other types of merchandise. Sufyān Al-Thawrī who was also merchant, and [ʿAbdullāh] Ibn Al-Mubārak who was a merchant too.

Those who had great level of patience (*ṣabr*) and were content even if the money they had were insufficient such as Bishr Al-Ḥāfī and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal.

If a person can neither have the patience nor attain the perfection of those, then he will probably flip into trials and perhaps compromise his religiosity.

O student of knowledge! You need to work hard to collect money so you become in no need of people as this will help you in focusing on your religion.

It is the love of this worldly life that drives most people to pretend being religious, ascetic or humble, and it is a vice that often afflicts scholars. In most cases, the love of this worldly life happens because of poverty, but if they have enough wealth yet still accompany rulers and oppressive people to receive more wealth, they will be deemed greedy and outside the fold of circle of scholars.

We seek refuge with Allāh from such situations.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-ELEVEN

Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is the Best of All Sciences

The best proof for the virtue (*faḍl*) of a matter is the fruit (*thamr*) it produces. And whoever observes the fruit of Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) will realise that it is the best of sciences (*afḍal al-ʿulūm*).

This is notable when you understand the founders of *Madhhabs* excelled over their entire generations due to their *fiqh* though there were during their times, those who were more knowledgeable than them in Qur'ān, ḥadīth or linguistics.

Take the examples found in our time to appreciate this! You find today a young person who is aware of the apparent disputes of scholars [over matter of fiqh] and knows the rulings on newly occurring events that no other expert scholars know; he therefore stands out and suffices himself. On the other hand, many are those whom we have seen excelling in Qur'ān, ḥadīth, *tafsīr* or Arabic language, yet they do not know most religious rulings despite their old-age—and worse still—they may not even know about the actions they intend to perform in the prayer (*ṣalāh*).

A jurist nevertheless who excels in *fiqh* must not focus on learning *fiqh* all the while remaining foreign to other religious knowledge, because in such case he will not be a jurist.

He should rather learn from each branch the needed portions then focus on learning *fiqh* as it is the honour of this life and the Hereafter.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWELVE

False Piety

I see many people who are cautious from (urinal) drops of impurity; yet do not mind backbiting others! They give a lot of charity, yet do not mind indulging in usury! They pray at night but delay praying the obligatory prayer (*salah*)! Many are the examples of the demeanour of this type of people who preserve the branches and neglect the fundamentals.

I investigated the reason for this and found two such causes: Firstly: habit, and secondly: the influence of desires that deactivate the senses of people whenever it overpowers a person. The example of this is the case of the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) who upon hearing the caller say,

إِنَّكُمْ لَسَٰرِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

"You are thieves."

[*Yūsuf* (12): 70]

replied,

لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَٰرِقِينَ

> "You know that well that we did not come to commit mischief in this land, nor are we thieves."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12): 73]

In the Exegesis (*tafsīr*) books on the Qur'ān, it states that when the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) entered Egypt; they gagged their camels to ensure the camels not to eat from the grass of Egypt because it was not theirs. Their response to the accusation was as if they tried to say, you saw what we did with our camels so how do you expect us to steal?!

Yet, they forgot the difference between showing piety (*wara'*) with a bite that might be eaten by their camels and that would be beyond their power and control; and their act of throwing Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) in the well to be sold afterwards at a very cheap price!

There are some people who only comply with the minor issues and in matters that are inexpensive and simple or that they know for a fact such compliance will not affect their clothing and food. There are others who accept usury and then say, 'how my enemy could see me now after I sold my house and changed my riding animals and clothes'.

There are some people who are very cautious with their purity (*tāhāra*) therefore they use a lot of water in ablution (*wudū'*), but never avoid backbiting (*ghība*)! There are other people who resort to wrong interpretations to gain things all the while knowing that they are not permissible! I even knew of a man who is considered from the good people and worshippers who received some money from another man to build a *Masjid.* However, he took the money for himself. He asked for forgiveness on his death bed.

There are some people who refrain from sins because they are used to not committing them. Yet, when they are exposed to a sin, they become unable to control themselves and commit so many. There are examples that make you wonder and surprised but that is too lengthy topic to mention here.

We all know that there were many Jews who used to perform abundant religious rituals before the spark of Islām, and yet did not accept Islām when it came, although they knew it was the truth.

All this was because they could not resist their desire (*sarḥ al-hawā*) of keeping their leadership positions. The case of Caesar is similar as he recognised Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ), but was unable to resist his desire to abandon his kingdom.

Beware! beware of abandoning the fundamentals, and of neglecting the control over your desires, because once the cattle of desire is let loose it will graze the plantation of piety.

The example of desire is like a chained leopard that if it is leashed well, it will be easy to control. Perhaps when its overwhelming desires (*shahwāt*) be provoked sometimes thus it becomes too strong to the point of breaking the chain and becoming loose. However, whilst some people leash their desires using a chain, some others do so with a flimsy string!

An intelligent person (*'āqil*) should beware of the devils of desire (*shayāṭīn al-hawā*), and be aware of all that his enemies feed on to be strong and all that which brings him strength.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTEEN

The Importance of Being Cautious when Dealing with Friends

Trusting people [unconditionally] and befriending anyone is one of the biggest errors because the worst of enemies are those who used to be friends at one point for they have been exposed to your secrets. A poet said:

> Beware of your enemy once, but beware of your friend
> a thousand times.
> Perhaps a friend might flip, so he would know how to harm you more.

Know that envying (*ḥasd*) others for bounties (*niʿma*) they have, and aspiring to reach higher status (*ḥubb al-rifʿa*) is instilled in human nature! If a person believes that he is your peer, he may then find out that you have excelled over him and so will be affected and perhaps envy you. This is what happened to Yūsuf's (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) brothers.

If you were to ask: 'How would a person be without friends?' My response would be, 'You know that peers are envious and the vast majority of laypeople believe that scholars do not smile or fulfil any of the worldly desires (*shahwāt*); hence if they saw him enjoying some of the lawful, they no longer show respect to him! If this is the case of laypeople and the case of peers, whom do you think will be suitable to deal with?'

By Allāh, even beware with taking your own *'self'* (*nafs*) as a friend because it changes! That being the case, the best way is to beware of people and deal with them guardedly, and only have acquaintances without hoping that they will become true friends (*ṣadīq ṣādiq*).

If you ever decide however, to take a true friend then let him not be at the same level as you because jealousy of peers is more probable. Let him be above the level of laypersons and not someone hoping to attain your status.

In such case, if you befriend intelligent persons then your secrets will be exposed to them, and if you befriend dumb persons then the purpose of having friends will not be fulfilled. Therefore, allow your dumb friends to enter your house and help you in matters related to your family because they will never know your secrets.

And keep your intelligent friends for purposes irrelevant to your personal affairs and secrets.

And be content with the kind of friends I described for you! And do not meet your friends without wearing the shield of cautiousness (*dhir' al-ḥadhr*), and do not reveal to them a secret that you can hide from them—be like how the wolf is described in the following line of poetry:

He sleeps with one eye shut while using the second eye to avoid enemies.

So he is awake and asleep at the same time.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FOURTEEN

Beware of Humiliating Yourself Before the People of Worldly Pleasures

I know of some people who spent all their time in youth seeking knowledge (*'ilm*) and enduring for this purpose all the types of harm. Avoiding all the types of comfort and luxury. All this was because they refused to be in the state of ignorance (*jahl*) or be in such a low position and because they wanted to acquire knowledge and its virtues. However, by the time they acquired from knowledge what made them distant from the category of those who seek after worldly pleasures and know nothing but the immediate reward. They lacked funds to sustain themselves and so they travelled around seeking assistance of the lowly people, thereby humiliating themselves before the despicable, oppressive and low-life types of people.

I addressed some of them, 'Woe to you! What happened to the pride you once had that made you refuse to be ignorant and because of which you stayed awake all nights and fasted all days just to gain knowledge (*'ilm*)?

How is it that after gaining a high noble status, you sunk to the lowest level?

Do you not have a bit of pride to prevent you from dragging yourself that low?

Do you not have the bit of knowledge that could take you away from the environment of desires (*manākh al-hawa*)?

Did not knowledge equip you with enough strength to control your desirous *'self'* (*nafs*) from grazing in the fields of evil?!

It seems as if your hard work was only to gain worldly benefits!'

I find your claim that you are only seeking sustenance to support yourself while seeking knowledge! You should know that finding a job from which you can earn a living that keeps you away from the lowly people is better than seeking knowledge.

If you were able to know what harms your religiosity, you would not have thought that seeking from this worldly life was of any benefit! You will know instead that such a daring attempt puts yourself at risk and does not save face, particularly when you have always been keen to maintain your dignity from turning to someone that a person in your position should not turn to.

It is unlikely that you will suffice with the minimum needed for your survival after you have received this type of help. It is most likely you will ask for money beyond that; and you know it is a sin to beg for money beyond your basic needs.

What is even more unlikely is that you can show piety (*wara'*) with respect to the money you will take! In such case, nothing will guarantee your safety (*salāma*) and ensure your return to your homeland for such deserts have thrown many lives in its remote areas.

Needless to add that whatever you have earned will be spent and the only things that will remain are: the favour of the low-life for helping you, the shame you will receive from the pious, while the ignorant people follow your leading example.

It is enough shame that you know the low rank of worldly life and yet you dared to come after it—particularly having indulged in such affairs after you have grown old in age, and he who does good in the first part of his life, will do good in the latter part.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTEEN

A Pathway for Students of Knowledge

I noticed that greed causes the greedy (*ḥarīs*) to miss out on the intended purpose. They are many who greed (*ḥirs*) after money and accumulate great wealth while still keen to increase their wealth further.

These kind of people however, do not seem to realise the purpose of money is to spend it during their lifetime and not spend lifetime earning it.

Many are those who spent their lives chasing money without enjoying it; they wasted all their lives collecting what their heirs will acquire afterwards to spend. This type of people is like what one poet said:

It is just like a silkworm that ruins itself while building (silk) that will end up being used by others.

Another form of avarice is the keen desire to collect books for there are many people who spent their entire lives in writing and compiling books (instead of benefiting from their contents). This form is found among some of the scholars of ḥadīth who spent their entire lives copying and listening to ḥadīths. This group is of two types:

The type of people who busy themselves with the science of ḥadīth and authenticating the reports without having the knowledge to be able to understand the ruling on any matter; though they may be aware of hundreds of routes for one single report!

I was informed that one of the scholars of ḥadīth (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) had heard the narrations complied in the book *'Juz'* of Ibn 'Arafah from one hundred teachers and he had seventy copies of the book.

The other type compile books and hear its content without knowing the authenticity or meanings of such content as they are only proud of hearing the content of a book directly and collecting copies of these books. This is because they busied themselves with matters that diverted them from learning the important aspects of knowledge.

These types of people are as Al-Hutai'ah described in his lines of poetry:

Camels carrying the books on their backs have no knowledge
of what they carry
A camel does not know what is in the bags they carry should they step in
mud or lose the bags

You find some of them think that mastering the science of narrations alone is enough to qualify them to indulge in what is beyond their knowledge; thus when they give a *fatwa* they err and when they talk about the fundamentals they confuse everything.

I do not like to mention people by name, otherwise I would have narrated many stories on the confusion of some great scholars from among them but their condition is known to the verifying scholars.

If someone were to ask: Is there now a ḥadīth that says: 'Two kind of people whose appetite for what they love will never end: A person who seeks knowledge and a person who seeks worldly benefits'?"[138]

My response would be, 'As for scholars, I do not say they should have enough of knowledge or suffice with some of it. Rather, I am advising them to start with gaining knowledge that is more important because an intelligent person must estimate his lifespan and work accordingly.'

Therefore, if he managed to reach the lofty level in knowledge that he desired before he dies, then he prepared himself well for each stage of his life—and if he could not then his intention will suffice him.

That said, once a person realises that his life is short and knowledge is abundant, then it is not appropriate for a person who seeks perfect virtues to busy his time in compiling or writing down narrations just so he can find all the routes and know every strange report.

This is more emphasised when a person is busy with compiling reports and so has no time to memorise the Qur'ān, or is busy in the sciences of Qur'ān but does not know the ḥadīth, or is busy in learning the matters of dispute among scholars but does not know the evidences used to derive such rulings!"

If someone asks me, 'Given what you said, I ask you to choose for me what you will choose for yourself?'

I will answer, 'It is clear whether or not a person has vitality and high endeavours from a young age.'

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[138] Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*, 1/170. It is ṣaḥiḥ—see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*, #6624—on theauthority of Ka'b Ibn Mālik (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

Sufyān Ibn 'Uyaynah said, 'My father told me after I reached the age of fifteen: 'You are no longer a child, so follow that which is good so you become from among the people of goodness.' Since then, I put my father's advice in front of me, and never swayed away from it.'

A person with self-respect and pride must refuse to be deficient when he is able not to be! Had being a Prophet been attainable through hard work, a person should not settle with being a pious noble, and if he were able to be a Caliph, he should not settle with being an Amir (a governor or leader), and if he were able to be an Angel he should not settle with being a human.

The main idea behind this is that a person must try to attain the possible levels of perfection in both knowledge and deeds, particularly when you know that life is short and knowledge is abundant.

You should therefore start with learning and memorising the Qur'ān and studying its tafsir moderately so he becomes aware of the Qur'ān.

Then learn the seven readings of the Qur'ān and study some grammar and books of linguistics as well as the major works of ḥadīth such as the *Ṣaḥiḥ* Books, *Musnad* Books and *Sunan* Books. Thereafter you ought to know the weak narrators and the names of narrators, which is a field scholars have authored books about that suffice the students the trouble of researching.

After this, you should read books of history to learn essential things that one cannot overlook such as the lineage of the Messenger (ﷺ), his relatives, wives and biographies.

Then you should direct your attention towards learning *fiqh*; hence you should learn a *Madhhab* and the rulings that scholars disputed over. While investigating the matters of dispute, you should look into the sources upon which the different opinions are based such as the tafsir of *ayāt* or ḥadīths or language.

You ought to study the principles of *fiqh* and inheritance laws as it should be noted that *fiqh* is the basis of all other sciences.

As for the science of the fundamentals of creed. It suffices you to look into what lead you to know the Existence of the Maker; hence if you could establish His Existence by evidence and know all that which is applicable to Him and all that which is not, and could affirm the Messengers He sent and so it is a must to accept their words.

Once this stage is complete, you have achieved the objectives of this science. If you have more time, then let it be in *fiqh* matters because it is the most beneficial. And if you are able to write books then you will leave behind good successors while ensuring taking the means to marry and have a child.

A person must understand that this life is a passing stage and so he should heed to learn how to worship and build a connection or relationship with Allāh, Most High, for the knowledge that he acquired must direct him towards Him. Once a person seeks knowing Allāh sincerely and learns how to build a connection or relationship with Him, he is then most likely to be placed into the state of pious nobility. And Whoever Allāh chooses will be given guidance.

There are some people whom Allāh looks after and nurtures (i.e. during their childhood and young age). He furnishes them with intellect to discipline them and sound understanding to straighten them.

Then, He takes care of educating them and facilitates the means whereby they become closer to Him. To this end, He protects them from all attempts to sway them from His path, and repels temptations away from them.

I ask Allāh to make us from them.

I seek refuge with Allāh from being let down and failure.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTEEN

Hidden Deeds Manifest Outwardly

The sincerity (*ikhlās*) and worship (*'ibādah*) of a person in privacy (*khalwa*) manifests upon him outwardly.

Many are the believers who are mindful of Allāh in private, so they abandon desirable things out of fear of falling into Allāh's Punishment; hoping (*rajā'*) in His reward or out of deep glorification (*ijlāl*) to Him. When they do this, it is as if they have thrown a fragrant stick of Indian incense on an ember, which makes everyone smell its good smell without knowing where it came from.

The more he perseveres in abandoning that he desires, the more beloved he becomes—and the more he keeps pushing back the thing he is abandoning, the stronger is the fragrance. To this effect, the eyes of people glorify him and their tongues praise him, all the while not knowing why! They are in fact, unable to describe him because they are unable to comprehend his reality.

The scent of such people sometimes lasts and continues till after their death depending on the strength of the smell of scent. Some of them are remembered for a while after their death but afterwards they are forgotten, and some people are mentioned for a hundred of years after their death before they too are forgotten and their graves are not even recognised; others become icons whose name and memory lasts forever.

Yet those who fear people and do not mind Allāh in privacy, their lowly rank will be according to the sins committed in private. Their ugly smell thus will exude as per the sins committed, causing the hearts of people to distance from them in disgust. If the sins committed in private were small, people may praise him but they will not mention the person with much goodness.

And, if the sins committed were large, it is very likely that people may not speak of him at all, neither in good nor in bad.

There are sins committed in private that result in misery (*shiqqa*) in this life and the Hereafter; it appears as if he is told to (choose and) stay in the place you decided for yourself, and so he lives confusingly.

O my brothers! Look at sins and their bad impacts. Abū'l-Dardā' (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*) said: 'A slave of Allāh commits a sin (*ma'ṣiya*) in private, so Allāh instils in the hearts of believers disliking (*bughḍ*) of him, while he is unaware.'

You should contemplate what I have written and do not underestimate what you do in private or what you hide in your hearts because intention (*niyyah*) is the basis of all actions and the reward is proportional to sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*).

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTEEN

Patience and Acceptance of Destiny

Whoever is aware of the work of fate (*qadr*), will have patience (*sabr*) towards it. The most ignorant of people is he who tries to resist the work of fate because the purpose of the One who predestined the fate is that people show humility (*dhull*) to Him and submit to His Will. Had people been able to change the predestined, they would not submit nor show humility.

For example, when a poor person (*faqīr*) feels extremely hungry, he endures it patiently until he is no longer able to, and then he resorts to begging. Yet he begs while he is shameful (*mustāḥayyan*) from Allāh for asking people for aid though he is excused for seeking the help of people. As he sees himself defeated by patience, he continues to feel ashamed of resorting to the creation and not the Creator and this is what Allāh expects of him.

The departure of the Prophet (ﷺ) from Makkah and being unable to return to it until he was under the protection of Al-Mutʿim Ibn ʿAdī, who was one of the (benevolent) disbelievers is another example on this. Glory to He who made the outcome dependant on their causes so that people to take the means!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTEEN

The Fluctuations of Time are Tests from Allāh

Glory is to Allāh Who subjects His slaves (to trials) in order to test their patience and expose their true natures in times of hardship!

Angels prostrated to Adam (*ʿalayhi as-salām*), while shortly thereafter he was expelled from Paradise (*jannah*).

Nūḥ (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) was beaten until he fainted, while shortly thereafter he was rescued in the ark, and his enemies were destroyed.

Ibrāhīm (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) was thrown in the fire, and then came out to safety (*salāma*).

Ismaʿeel (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) lied down in surrender to be slaughtered, then he came to safety, and his praise remained.

Yaʿqūb (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) lost his eyesight after losing his son, and then he regained it after reuniting with his son.

Mūsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) was a shepherd, and then was elevated to a rank where he spoke to Allāh (*taqlīm*).

Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was an orphan and faced many hardships from his enemies, and from financial difficulties; yet he persevered and was firm as a mountain. After his objective was fulfilled and when he conquered Makkah, the Angel of death came to him and took his soul while going through the pangs of death.

Whoever observes the sea of life, knows how its waves should be received and know how to be patient while dealing the changing days, will not panic when calamity (*bilā'*) strikes. and will not become overly happy when good times (*rikhā'*) arrive immediately.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETEEN

Perform Deeds that You Can Bear

An intelligent person should not attempt to exert himself to perform voluntary actions that require endurance until he knows for sure that he is able to perform them. He should also practice some of them in private because he cannot assure he's able to manage them and thus when people see him in such state they will condemn him!

As an example, a person hears the stories of ascetics (*zubbād*) and so he decides to assume their lifestyle; hence he abandons good clothing, wears simple humble clothes and secludes himself in a small room to worship Allāh.

During this time, his heart becomes overwhelmed with remembering death and the Hereafter. Later on however, his nature forces him to go back to as he was before. As a result, he goes back to worse than when he had started or continues to fluctuate between his state before committing (to asceticism) and his state after committing.

An intelligent person practices modesty and wears modest clothes that do not give the impression he is a needy person. At the same time shows he is from the good people. Afterwards, when his endeavours become strong, he should practice at home—far from the eyes of people—the acts he can handle and throw away in his privacy the clothes he wore in public. This is farther from showing off and the safest way to save face.

Some people, however, become overwhelmed with the notion that they will die any second and only think about the Hereafter to the point of burying their books! This is a great error in my opinion though it was done by some great scholars. I asked some of my teachers about this act, and was told that such an action is an error. I still gave some of them the benefit of doubt as I believe these buried books included reports narrated from weak people whom they could not recognise, therefore they had to bury them so no one takes such reports.

This is similar to what was reported from Sufyān that he buried his books having in it some personal views he disliked people to take from him.

It is also similar to the case where 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) burnt the copies of Qur'ān so that people do not take from it except what was agreed on. This kind of interpretation is valid for those who were in the rank of scholars.

As for the act of Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Hawārī and Ibn Asbāṭ who washed off their books is evident negligence and wastefulness.

Beware! Beware from committing a forbidden act or practice what a person may think is a virtue, while in fact it is a sin or show what one cannot handle. You should adhere to the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ) who said: "Perform deeds that you can bear."[139]

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[139] Bukhārī, #1996 and Muslim, #1103—on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY

Wisdom Necessitates Looking into the Consequences

From the most ignorant of people is he who favours the immediate gain though he cannot assure its outcome and so overlooks a more definite safety in the future.

We have heard of many wealthy individuals and rulers who indulged in unlawful activities and did not care about them being lawful or unlawful. They later felt guilty while on their deathbeds; they felt bitter sorrow that was not equalled by all the pleasure they had felt. Aside from the remorse and regret, the punishment awaiting them in the Hereafter is more disturbing.

There is no doubt that human nature loves worldly pleasures and I can understand when a person is after these pleasures. However, one must look into the method of earning these pleasures so he assures no regret follows the pleasures he attains because there is no goodness in a pleasure that is followed with fire.

Would an intelligent person agree to be king for one year then to be executed? Never! In fact an intelligent person would agree to endure hardship for several years in order to relax at the end.

Therefore woe to pleasure that is followed with punishment!

Muhammad Ibn 'Alī Al-Quhistānī reported that Dulaf Ibn Abī Dulaf told him, 'One day, after the death of my father. I had a dream in which I saw a person telling me to answer the ruler (i.e. his father). I complied and walked with the caller, so he led me into a deserted house whose walls are black and have no doors or ceilings. Then, we climbed the stairs to enter into a room whose walls had marks from fires and whose floor had marks of ashes. In that room, I saw my father naked having his head between his knees who said in a surprise when he saw me: 'Are you Dulaf?' I said, 'Yes, may Allāh rectify the affairs of the ruler.' Upon that, he started reciting the following lines of poetry:

Tell my family and hide nothing about all
I have faced in the *barzakh*'[140]
I was questioned for all what I did but I beg your compassion
For my terrible state and what I may face as punishment

Then he said to me, 'Did you understand?' I replied, 'Yes I did.' Then he started to recite the following lines of poetry:

If we were to die and be left alone
Death would have been an absolute comfort

But if we die we will be resurrected
And then we will be questioned for everything we did

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[140] The interval period and barrier between death and resurrection

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-ONE

A Student of Knowledge is between Physical Pleasures and Intellectual Pleasures

All pleasures (*ladhat*) are either physical or intellectual; the peak of all physical pleasures is sexual relations, and the peak of all intellectual pleasures is knowledge. He who earns both pleasures in this life has gained the ultimate pleasures possible, and so I will direct the student of knowledge (*'ilm*) to the said ultimate pleasures.

A student whom Allāh has blessed has strong determination (*'ulu al-himmah*) that he is born with. From his childhood you will see him seeking the highest status in everything; just like the Prophet (ﷺ) who used to sit on the chair of 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭālib (the leader's chair) when he was a child. So 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭālib used to say, 'This son of mine will have a high status (in the future).'

If someone were to ask: 'If I have vigour, but I was not blessed with the things I am after, what should I do?'

The answer would be: 'If you miss out on certain types of sustenance you are bound to earn other types.'

It is unlikely that Allāh grants you vigour then does not aid you. Hence, you should examine yourself because perhaps you have not been grateful for something that He has given you, or perhaps you were tested with some temptations (*hawa*) that you could not abstain from.

Know that He may have prevented you from many worldly gains as He wants to favour you with the pleasure of knowledge because you are too weak and He knows what is best for you.

I would like to further explain something for you: A beginner in seeking knowledge ought to learn a bit from each type of knowledge. He must focus on fiqh as it is the most important but without neglecting knowledge related to Qur'ān, ḥadīth and history. He should then sharpen his tongue with grammar and knowledge of linguistics. When knowledge directs him to know Allāh, he will see that many doors have opened for him and not anyone else.

He should also dedicate some of his time towards commerce and earning money by appointing one to handle his business where possible, and to ensure not to be extravagant and wasteful. This is because acquiring the knowledge and acting upon it until one reaches the rank where he knows his Lord will captivate his feelings to the point of occupying him from everything else. Indeed, this is a status that is free of all defects.

If he has the urge (*shawq*) for marriage, it is better for him to find a slave-woman for free women often require more responsibilities and are more demanding. He should also practice coitus interrupts while being with the slave-women until he is sure of their character and religiousness as only then he can seek children from them otherwise he should opt for others.

I advise him not to marry a free woman unless he knows she is fine with him marrying another woman and having slave-women. In such case, he should focus on enjoying the time with her and not to exhaust himself in discharging his semen for that will consume his strength and effect his capacity.

The abovementioned is the case where a person combines the ultimate types of pleasures. I have phrased my words in a suggestive and indicative manner, for the smart one will know what I have not written herein.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-TWO

An Advice Helping Students of Knowledge to Memorise

Know that a learner needs to constantly study for it is a mistake to excessively repeat what he studied day and night because this will assuredly make him become bored or become sick.

I narrated that Abū Bakr Ibn Al Anbārī was sick and on his deathbed a doctor came to examine him. After he examined him, he said to Abū Bakr, 'You were doing what nobody else does! Then he left and said, 'there is no hope for a cure for him'. People asked Abū Bakr about what he used to do. He replied, 'I used to revise ten thousand pages every week.'

It is not right to burden the heart (*tahmīl al-qalb*) with memorising (*hifẓ*) too many forms of knowledge (*'ilm*), because the heart is an organ after all.

It is similar to the physical strength of people, some of them are able to carry a hundred pounds and others may not be able to carry twenty. The hearts are just the same, so a person ought to be mindful of the level of his strength and capacity because if he exerts all his power all at once, then he will miss out on other things.

It is similar to how gluttony drives a person to eat a few more bites and that becomes a reason preventing him from eating other meals! The correct behaviour is that a person spends some time memorising the portions he wants according to his ability and then to revise what he memorised twice in the day and twice in the night. The rest of the time he should look after the comfort of his strength.

Consistency is a significant principle in memorisation because many people stop revising the things they memorised and so they end up forgetting what they know, and then spend long periods of time attempting to regain it.

Furthermore, memorisation should be practiced at particular ages i.e. the young age is the best period for memorisation and the best time of day to revise is before dawn and at midday.

Daytimes are better for memorisation than night times, and times of hunger are better than times of satiation.

It is not advisable to memorise while there is greenery around, or at the beach, because these things will distract you from memorization.

Higher places are better for memorisation than lower places.

Seclusion is very important to help one memorise, while freeing oneself from worldly distractions is the principle of all principles.

It is also important to have a day for resting so that the memorised portions become established in the heart. This will aid memorisation and strengthen the body just as a freshly built wall must be left for a few days to settle, and then build over it.

Other important principles that a person should observe while memorising is to reduce the amount being memorised while ensuring he is constant in it, and to move from one subject to another only after he masters the subject he is focusing on.

If a person lacks vitality for memorisation, he should stop because challenging one's self while knowing it is not working does not bring any result.

To balance your mood by watching your diet and fixing your worries is essential because food has a great effect on memorisation:

Al Zuhrī said, 'Since I started memorisation, I never ate vinegar.'

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was asked: 'What helps to memorize *fiqh* (issues)?" He replied, "Freeing yourself from all worries (*hamm*) and distractions.'

Ḥammād Ibn Salamah said, 'By reducing anguish (*qila al-ghamm*).'

Makhūl said, "He who cleans his clothes will have less worries, and he who smells good will enhance in intellect. And he who does both his mannerism will improve."

I also advise the beginning student of knowledge to defer marriage as much as possible for Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal married after reaching forty. This is needed to free yourself from the distractions resulting after marriage and so you will be able to focus on memorisation. If a person has the urge for marriage that he no longer can postpone it, then marry but he should not have sexual relations too often in order maintain his strength for acquiring knowledge.

A student must set priorities in memorisation because life is too precious to be wasted and knowledge is abundant.

Although all knowledge is good, it is important to have priorities because there are people who spend all their time memorising knowledge that is deemed less important than other types of knowledge.

Memorising the Qur'ān is the best knowledge to start to memorise and then comes *fiqh* and so one.

He whom Allāh has blessed with an awakened heart will be guided by his awakened heart and not need anyone to guide him. And he whose intention is to please Allāh with learning knowledge will be guided to that which is best, as He said,

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ

"Fear Allāh and He will teach you."

[*al-Baqarah* (2):282]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-THREE

The Intelligent Person Heeds to the Consequences

He who wishes for continued safety and well-being must fear Allāh. No person commits a sin, no matter how small, except that he will be punished for it sooner or later.

You would be foolish to think that if you face no difficulties and that your life is smooth and rewarding after committing a sin, that you have been forgiven. All the while, you seem to forget that Allāh said,

مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوٓءًا يُجْزَ بِهِۦ

> "He who commits a bad deed will be recompensed for it."
> [*al-Nisa'* (4):123]

Perhaps your '*self*' says to you that Allāh is All Forgiver and so you remain lenient! It is true that Allāh certainly forgives sins, but only to those whom He Wills. Let me elaborate by explaining a scenario to help you understand the meaning of forgiveness (*maghfira*), which I advise you to contemplate:

If a person commits a sin not without having the intention (*qasd*) to do so, without determining beforehand to indulge in such a sin and willing never to go back to it again. But then, after he commits the sin, regrets it and seeks Allāh's forgiveness; it is as if he had committed the sin in error. The example of this case is when a man is exposed to a beautiful woman, his innate nature overpowers him so he enjoys looking at her beauty all the while his heart and mind is heedless to the Divine Command that forbids such a look. This causes him to become as if he is intoxicated or unconscious. When he awakes from the intoxication of his innate nature and realises the sin he committed he becomes remorseful. This remorse (*nadm*) washes off the dirt of the sin that was unplanned mistake. This meaning is expressed in the verse,

إِنَّ
ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَيْفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟
فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ ٢٠١

> "Indeed, those who fear Allāh—when some suggestion from Satan assails them, they remember Allāh, and at once they have insight."
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7):201]

On the other hand, if such a person continues to look at her and repeats his looks while insisting on it, it makes him in the position of a person who intentionally and arrogantly violates the prohibition of Allāh. In this case, the distance between him and the forgiveness of Allāh depends on how insisting he is to commit the sin.

From the signs indicating that he is far from receiving the forgiveness of Allāh is when he does not notice the punishment of what he did.

It was reported that Ibn al-Jallā said: 'One time, my teacher saw me looking diligently at a Christian youth!'[141] He admonished me and said: 'what are you doing?' You will find the punishment of what you did sooner or later. Because of that sin, and after forty years from that incident, I forgot the Qur'ān I memorised.

Know that is from the greatest trials that a person believes he is safe after committing a sin just because he was left unpunished. This is because punishment is postponed sometimes. It is also from the greatest punishments that a person is being punished but remains unaware of that! It is even worse when the punishment is depriving one from his piety or sealing his heart or choosing that which harms his 'self'—and the sign of this kind of punishment is that a person commits a sin then afterwards his body becomes healthy and his worldly objectives are achieved.

One of those who reflect and are mindful of what happens to him said, 'Once I looked at what it is unlawful for me to look at, and after I realised my sin I waited for my punishment. Some period later I had to take a long trip that I did not intend or planned. During this journey I faced a lot of difficulties and later the dearest person to my heart passed away; in addition to other things that were taken away from me and had a great effect on me! I then decided to overcome these hardships with repentance and turning to Allāh, so my affairs were rectified. My desires however overpowered me again. They made me look at what it is unlawful for me to look at, upon which my heart became idle, deprived from its softness and I lost more than what I lost the first time.

Furthermore, I was compensated for what lost. If I was not compensated it would have been better for me! When I contemplated what I have been compensated and what has been taken away from me, the pain of these lashes made me cry out and since then I am here standing on the shore [of safety] crying out: 'O my brothers! Beware of the troubled waves of this sea [of sins] and do not be fooled with its calmness. Resort to the shore for safety and remain in the fortress of piety for the punishment is bitter.

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[141] Scholars stated it is disliked to look at beardless men and young boys and this is why his teacher admonished him.

You ought to know that holding fast to piety (*taqwā*) will make you endure some bitterness such as losing material objects and desirable things. Yet this is required because it is like the example of dieting that makes you avoid what you like, but afterwards it helps you to recover since if you do not follow the prescribed diet, it may cause your sudden death.

By Allāh, if you had to sleep between the garbage with dogs just to seek the pleasure of the Inflictor (Allāh), it would have been nothing compared to attaining His pleasure. And, if you have achieved all that can be achieved in this life, all the while He is displeased with you, your assumed safety will then be your destruction. Your assumed recovery will then be your illness, and your assumed good health will be your disease. This is because a matter is judged by its end and the intelligent one is he who heeds to the consequences.

I advise you to be patient while being afflicted with a calamity for such hardships does not last for long!

And Allāh is the Guide to success for there is no power except by Him and there is no strength except by His Grace.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FOUR

Oneness of Allāh's Names & Attributes

A group of non-Arabs who were from the people of innovations (*ahl'ul-bidʿah*) visited the city of Baghdād and started preaching to the laypeople. Most of their sermons were advocating that the Qur'ān people have and read from, is not the Words of Allāh for it is nothing but papers and ink! They also claimed that Allāh is not above the heavens and that the slave-girl that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked, "Where is Allāh?"[142] was a mute and so she pointed at the sky to mean that He is not from the idols being worshipped on earth! They further challenged those who stated that the Qur'ān is made of letters and voice as they claimed that the words of Qur'ān are actually the words of Angel Jibrīl (*ʿalayhi as-salām*)!

They remained preaching these innovations until they removed the glorification that most of the laypeople had for Qur'ān to the point that laypeople started to agree with them and say its correct thing because Qur'ān was something that Angel Jibrīl brought in a bag!

This made a group of people who adhered to the Sunnah (*ahl'ul-*

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[142] Muslim, #537 on the authority Muʿāwiyyah Ibn al-Ḥakam (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

sunnah) to come to me and complain about what has been happening. I said to them, 'be patient because sometimes doubts raise their heads even if such doubts are refuted. Whilst the falsehood may win a round but the truth wins the battle, and you know that falsifiers are many in numbers as in each country there must be some who counterfeit money.'

One of them asked what we should say in response to these doubts. I said, 'You should know—may Allāh guide you to success—Allāh, Most High, and His Messenger accepted from people to believe in the general beliefs of Islām without requiring anyone to know the details of such beliefs. This is because such details will either confuse the beliefs and creed of people or happen to be beyond the comprehension of mankind.'

The first belief that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) advocated was affirming the existence of the Creator (*ithbāt al-Khāliq*) and so the Qur'ān included verses (*ayāt*) mentioning the signs of His creation to stand as evidence for His existence. For example, Allāh said,

أَمَّن جَعَلَ ٱلْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَٰلَهَآ أَنْهَٰرًا

> "It is He Who made the earth a stable ground and placed within it rivers."
>
> [*al-Naml* (27):61]

and

وَفِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

> "And there signs in yourselves. Do not you see?"
>
> [*al-Dhariyāt* (51):21]

The Qur'ān then continued to establish the evidence of His existence through His creation and by highlighting that He is All Powerful. Allāh established the evidence on the truthfulness of the

Prophet (ﷺ) by supporting him with miracles, the greatest of which is the Qur'ān, which all the creatures failed to produce anything like it. Such evidences sufficed the Companions as it did for everyone in the first generation when there was no innovation or deviation. As Allāh, Most High, Knew of the innovations that will take place afterwards.

He emphasised and provided more evidences in the Qur'ān since it is the fountain of all the knowledge and the greatest miracle (*akbar al-muʿjizāt*) of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ). To this end, He stated that the Qur'ān is sent down,

وَهَٰذَا كِتَٰبٌ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ

"This is a Blessed Book that We have sent down."
[*al-Anʿām* (6):92]

and that He sends down from it what cures people,

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ ٱلْقُرْءَانِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ

"We send down of the Qur'ān that which is healing."
[*al-Isrā'* (17): 82]

and that the Qur'ān is the His Speech (*kalām*), as He said,

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُبَدِّلُوا۟ كَلَٰمَ ٱللَّهِ

"They wish to change the Words of Allāh."
[*al-Fatḥ* (48):15]

and that it is audible (*masmūʿ*), as He said,

حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَٰمَ ٱللَّهِ

"Until he hears the Words of Allāh."
[*al-Tawbah* (9):6],

and that it is preserved (*maḥfūẓ*), as He said,

فِي لَوۡحٖ مَّحۡفُوظِۭ ﴿٢٢﴾

"Inscribed in a preserved Tablet."

[*al-Burūj* (85):22]

and

هُوَ ءَايَٰتُۢ بَيِّنَٰتٞ فِي صُدُورِ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَۚ

"Rather, the Qur'ān is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge."

[*al-'Ankabūt* (29):49]

and that it is written (*maktūb*) and recited (*matlū*),

وَمَا كُنتَ تَتۡلُواْ مِن قَبۡلِهِۦ مِن كِتَٰبٖ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُۥ
بِيَمِينِكَۖ

"And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand."

[*al-'Ankabūt* (29):48]

and so many other verses that stress such meanings that necessitates the authenticity of the Qur'ān.

Allāh then negated the capricious idea [of disbelievers] that the Prophet (ﷺ) invented the Qur'ān, so He said,

أَمۡ يَقُولُونَ ٱفۡتَرَىٰهُۚ بَلۡ هُوَ ٱلۡحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ

"Or do they say, 'He invented it?' Rather, it is the truth from your Lord."

[*al-Sajdah* (32):3]

and threatened him if this had been the case,

وَلَوْ
تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ ٱلْأَقَاوِيلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِٱلْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا
مِنْهُ ٱلْوَتِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

> "And if he [i.e. Muḥammad] were to invent up anything about Us some [false] sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand; then We would have cut off his life artery [aorta - of his heart]."
>
> [*al-Ḥaqqah* (69): 44-46]

and promised the one who alleges that the Qur'ān is the words of humans,

إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا قَوْلُ ٱلْبَشَرِ ﴿٢٥﴾ سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ ﴿٢٦﴾

> "[he claims] This is nothing but the word of a human being! [Hence,] I will cast him into Hell-fire."
>
> [*al-Mudaththir* (74):25-26].

He punished every disbelieving nation with a particular punishment, He ordered His Angels to execute. Such as the loud shout of Jibrīl that extinguished [nation of] Thamūd. The screaming wind that was sent upon [people of] 'Ād. The earth swallowing Qārūn, making the highest part of the city of the people of Lūṭ its lowest, and sending birds in flocks to strike those who intended to destroy the Ka'bah with stones of hard clay from Hell.

Yet He stated the punishment for those who disbelieve in the Qur'ān will be executed by Himself directly: He said,

فَذَرْنِي وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ

> "So leave Me, [O Muḥammad], with [the matter of] whoever denies this statement [the Qur'ān]."

[*al-Qalam* (68):44]

and

ذَرْنِي وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا ﴿١١﴾

"Leave me with the one I created alone."

[*al-Mudaththir* (74):11]

This emphasis is because the Qur'ān is the basis of all previous religions and testifies for every proceeding divinely revealed religion since they have nothing in their hands testifying to the authenticity of their beliefs except our Book, as their books were altered and changed.

Every intelligent person knows that the allegation of the disbeliever that the Qur'ān is the words of a human entails that he heard it. No person with intellect will dispute the fact that the pronoun used in the verse,

نَزَلَ بِهِ

"and Indeed it is."

refers to the Qur'ān and that the part of the verse,

وَإِنَّهُ

"it was sent down."

refer to the Qur'ān too, and that,

وَهَٰذَا كِتَٰبٌ

"This is a Book."

[*al-An'ām* (6):92]

denotes a book that is present.

In fact, this is a settled and undisputed understanding that no one opposed in the time of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*).

Shaytān introduced innovations later on with some people saying the Qur'ān was created (*makhlūq*)! Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal stood firm against this statement so that no one dare think of the Qur'ān in a manner that removes its glorification (*ta'ẓīm*) from the hearts of people or negate its quality as being the Words of Allāh.

He believed that it is disallowed to even come out with a statement that was never been said before [or found in Qur'ān and Sunnah]; hence he used to respond to his opponents, 'how could I say what was never said?'

People settled on this since then, until the appearance of 'Alī Ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī who adopted the view of the Mu'tazilah at one time—and then he recanted and agreed that the Speech of Allāh is an Attribute of His Essence! This claim necessitated that the Qur'ān we have in our hands is created, which confused the people and impacted their beliefs negatively. Since then, the people of innovations have been swimming in waves of confusion until today.

This issue and the doubts and refutations relating to it can be found in the books of creed; therefore I will not elaborate further on it but I will mention in brief what will be enough for whoever wants Allāh's guidance:Islām required us to believe in the general statements and to glorify the texts as they are. It forbade us to delve into whatever provokes doubts and is beyond the understanding of mankind.

If it is forbidden to investigate predestination (*qadr*) then do you think it would be allowed to investigate the Attributes of the One who predestined fate?! The reason for preventing us from delving into such details is because of two reasons I mentioned before; namely to avert any doubt that may confuse the beliefs and creed of people and because such details are beyond the understanding of mankind.

That being the case, if the evidences prove the existence of the Qur'ān then someone claims that Qur'ān does not exist on earth, then he rejected the evidences that Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) spared no effort to establish and affirm in the hearts of people. What source will we rely on to stipulate the lawful and the unlawful and decide and affirm any issue if we had nothing from Allāh?! The opponent has no choice but to support any of his own arguments by saying *"Allāh said..."* and this statement will oppose what he tries to negate! Having said that, the truth is to comply with the apparent evidences of the religion without delving into its minute details!

If a person attempts to cast a doubt into your heart by saying, 'If what you recite is actually your voice and what you read from is written by you, where is the Qur'ān?'

You should then say to such a person, 'We both agree that we have a source that we accept as evidence—that is the Qur'ān.'

Yet, you admonish me for affirming the existence of what cannot be affirmed tangibly while, in fact, it is you who should be admonished for denying the existence of a matter that is established and affirmed by religion!

As for their statement that the Qur'ān we have is just some papers and ink. It is like saying human beings are just flesh and blood! It is a farfetched notion because the essence of humans is the soul; hence if a person perceives humans as mere flesh and blood then he cannot see beyond the tangible.

If they argue, we say that the written is different from the writing, we reply: this is a statement we admonish too because neither you nor your opponent can verify it because if you believe the writings are the ink and shapes, it then means we know these things are not the Qur'ān; and if you intended to mean by it, the meanings standing out from these letters, we know that these are not the writings too.

This is why such matters are inappropriate to discuss because if a person cannot verify or explain a matter that is less complex and in rank than the Qur'ān, the soul for example, which we know it exists but have no knowledge of its details or true nature, then it befits more to admit that we cannot have detailed account of Allāh!

It is therefore obligatory to suffice with the texts we hear while negating anything that is inappropriate to describe Him with, because delving into such topics will not only increase the confusion and bring no benefit to anyone, it also requires whoever does that to deny textual evidences that are established without the need to bring any logical evidence. This shows that safety is only achieved by following the path of the righteous predecessors (*salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).

I want to say that to affirm the existence of God by the apparent meanings of verses (*ayāt*) and ḥadīths has more effect on laypeople and is more convincing than preaching to them about negating the similarity between Allāh's attributes and the attributes of humanity (*tanzih*) though it is a must that people affirm the *tanzih* of Allāh, Exalted be He.

Ibn 'Aqīl used to say, 'The apparent meanings of *ayāt* and ḥadīths befit the creed of laypeople the most because they easily accept what they can relate to. But if we remove this from their hearts, their glorification and mannerism towards Allāh will be removed.

Therefore I prefer laypeople to be confused with that doubt more than having them drowned in the concept of *tanzih* [alone] because *tashbīh* (i.e. understanding the Attributes of Allāh according to human attributes) dips them deep in the concept of affirming Him and His Attributes and so they will hope and fear as they can relate to what makes them hopeful and fearful. All the while, *tanzih* [alone] will make people to negate the Attributes and so they neither will be hopeful nor fearful.[143]

Whoever contemplates the religion will notice that texts focus on giving examples whose apparent meaning is something that people relate to such as the statement of the Bedouin who said to the Prophet (ﷺ): “Does our Lord laugh?” and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Yes”[144] without showing annoyance because of that.

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[143] To understand this chapter better and know what Ibn Al-Jawzī wanted to say, please see Chapter 61 where he explains in more details how laypeople should be approached and how to teach them these two concepts, *tashbih* and *tanzih*.

[144] Tabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*, 5/137, see *Zilāl al-Jannah*, #554—it is weak.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FIVE

People of Endeavours Stand between the Ultimate Dream and the Bitter Reality

Know that from the greatest of all calamities (*aʿẓam al-balāya*) is when Allāh endows you with capability and power to endeavour. But then He averts you from exerting your power and acting according to your capacity! The impact of this on you is noted in different aspects, for example He makes you proud resulting in you not accepting the help of others because you are unable to bear the burden of someone having favours on you. Allāh then afflicts you with poverty that forces you to accept their aid!

He makes you indulge in high luxury items and about the quality. And the type of food you eat, so you do not accept food that is readily available and easy to acquire. But afterwards Allāh makes you in need of money and He reduces the share of your provision! He makes your endeavours depend on what you find desirable then He distances you from achieving any of what you find desirable by making you impoverished!

He makes you long and keen to acquire knowledge but then He makes you devoid of energy and promptitude to revise what you have learnt and also prevents you from earning enough money to buy the books! He may also make you to aspire and be very keen to reach the levels of ascetics and those who know Allāh. But then He makes you in need of company of those whose interest is focused on worldly affairs. Indeed, this is a catastrophic trial.

As for those who have lowly endeavours and determination—who neither mind begging people for help nor believe he should find another wife [if his wife distracts him from worshipping Allāh], or suffices with a little of knowledge (*'ilm*) and does not long to be in the ranks of those who know Allāh.

These types of people are not sensitive and therefore are not bothered should they lose anything since they see what they have earned is highly potent. They act like children who feel excited about decorations! Indeed, those with lowly endeavours undermine all the virtues they miss.

It is he whose endeavours (*himma*) are high and who knows his Lord well who will find such a state catastrophic, for his determination and keen interest to assume all the opposites in increasing his level of perfection fail him to reach his intended destination. It is indeed a state where even the patience (*sabr*) of the patient ones runs out!

Had he not been between intervals of heedlessness (*ghafla*) in the life of the trialled person, his observation to the state of his slavery and the state of Lordship of Allāh would have blinded him, and his exerted efforts in the path of discipline would have made him barefooted. Since he is able to reach some of his objectives sometimes, and some other times he becomes heedless to what he intends—life becomes bearable.

This is a precious insight that only those who are acquainted with its path know its meanings.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SIX

Virtues of Refraining from the Doubtful

One time, my *'self'* (*nafs*) acted foolishly as it sought something it desires on the grounds of a valid interpretation that was unjustified. In response to that I argued, 'I ask you for Allāh's sake to be patient for the troubling waves of this life make me anxious not to drown us in its ocean, having no time to enjoy its wonders! If you decide to do anything then what I ask you to do first is to imagine that you have done it and then contemplate the possible consequences of your action and the fruits you will reap afterwards. Only then will you come to understand the least worse thing that could happen is to become remorseful, yet it is not even guaranteed that the sin will result in exposing you to the wrath of Allāh and Him turning away from you. And woe to a matter that will take one away from Allāh even if such thing is Paradise itself.[145]

Aside from all that, you should know that there is nothing in this life that goes unnoticed because the Scale of Justice detects even the atom. I urge you to think of those who have demised and those who are still alive, and then contemplate whose mention is spread in recounting goodness and whose mention is spread in recounting evil. Exalted is Allāh! For He is the One who exhibited to the public the truthfulness of the pious in their privacy! This manifestation results in having the hearts of people to incline to the righteous and to despise the vile, without even being aware of eithers' deeds.

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[145] A figurative expression to highlight the importance of the matter.

Iblis argued back saying, 'But by doing so, you are leaving that which you want just for the sake of people!' [i.e. you will avoid it just because you want to have a good reputation among people].

I replied, 'Not at all! What I have however just mentioned is some of the fruits that one will attain.'

See people who walk thirty miles just so they can be called seekers of knowledge, but the righteous earns the honour of good remembrance—though he did not look for it—in addition to the reward in the Hereafter:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ
ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا ﴿٩٦﴾

> "Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds—the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection."
>
> [*Maryam* (19): 96]

The 'self' replied anxiously, 'You ordered me to be patient though I am being tortured since leaving what I desire is a torture in itself.'

I said, 'You will be reimbursed for such a sacrifice because you will be compensated for each thing you abandon [for the sake of Allāh]! Besides, you are a servant created to fulfil a purpose; hence it is inappropriate for a hired person to rest during his working hours! I do not need to remind you that the lifetime of the righteous person is as short as the period he stays fasting during the day.

And whoever fears the punishment will certainly desert what's desired and whoever wants to be close [to Allāh] will surely abstain from the doubtful.

Indeed patience (*ṣabr*) has a sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) that only can be tasted after the consequences are revealed.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SEVEN

Following Sinful Desires Indicates Person's Lowly Endeavours

When the '*self*' longs for a sinful pleasure, it usually makes the person fail to notice the consequences and punishment of the sin. He then hears the voice of his intellect warning him, 'Woe to you! Do not do it! If you do not listen to me then not only will that sin lower your status and stop you from being raised to higher ranks; you will be left alone with what you have chosen!' If one's sinful desires became overwhelming and the advice of his intellect went unheeded, he will continue to slip down in ranks.

The example of such a person will be like a dog begging a lion—the king of all beasts—to change his name for he finds it very ugly. The lion refuses his request and explains that dogs are double-crossers and dog is the only name befitting him! The dog begs to be given a chance to prove the lion wrong, so the lion agrees and gives the dog a piece of a meat and tells him if he can manage to protect it until the next day he will change his name. During the day, the dog feels hunger and starts staring at the piece of meat while trying to be patient.

However later he becomes so hungry that he says to himself, 'what is wrong with my name?!' In fact I find it to be a very nice name! He then proceeds to eat the meat. This is the case of the one whose endeavour is low, since he accepts the lowest ranks and prefers the immediate outcome of his sinful desires over the awaited virtues and reward.

Beware the fire of desires for it spreads, and you are left thinking about how extinguish it. It takes nothing but a small slip for a person to fall in a deep hole, so and a tiny step leaves a mark that never can be removed! Indeed what is gone and missed cannot be restored or caught up. Thus, stay away from the causes of trials and temptations for it is rare to find a person roaming around them and make it unscathed.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-EIGHT

Life is a Warzone and a Battlefield

I find mankind standing in the battlefront with the devils (*shayāṭīn*) constantly shooting arrows of desires (*hawā*) at them; and hitting them with the swords of pleasures.

The ones who follow their sinful desire drop instantly dead, while the righteous ones continue to struggle and strive. With the long standing in the battlefield comes wounds and so they are wounded and treated, yet they are protected against death in such battle.

However, a scar in the face [i.e. major sins] is a disgrace that remains, therefore let those who strive beware of that!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-NINE

Beware of Falling in the Trap of this Worldly Life

This worldly life is nothing but a trap! The ignorant (*jāhil*) falls in it instantly and the intelligent (*'āqil*) Allāh-fearing (*mutaqī*) one does not give in to his hunger thus keep navigating around the bait placed in this trap—trying to get some of it without becoming the hunted.

Safety from this trap however, is unlikely and rare as many people strove for years then eventually fell in the trap.

Beware! Be warned, for I saw many who were upon the truth all their lifetimes and yet slipped when they were on their deathbeds.

However, a scar in the face [i.e. major sins] is a disgrace that remains, therefore let those who strive beware of that!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY

Hasten to Repent for the Outcome of Sin is Severe

O my brothers and whoever accepts my advice (*nasiha*)! You should know that the bitterness of sins doubles the sweetness it brings and the ugly effects that follow.

The One in whose hand is reward and punishment is aware of all your sins and no sin whatsoever will He miss.

Take heed in the story that was reported in the books of tasfir about the twelve sons of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*), each of whom had twelve children except Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) who had eleven children as a consequence of his innate desire that he had when he was seduced.[146]

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[146] [TN] The point that Ibn Al Jawzi tried to make is that we are punished sometimes for matters that we find too trivial that we fail to notice. He does not intend to mean that Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) committed a sin, rather he meant that he did not act according to his very high rank and so his human nature interfered in such an event. In other words, the people of high ranks are expected to meet the expectations hoped from a person in such rank to the point that even the law-

I pity a person who is being lashed yet still unable to feel the pain of flogging! I pity a person whose body is severely wounded but unaware of his injury! I pity a person who is being punished but still unaware of his punishment! How true it is that the greatest of all punishments in this life is when a person is punished, all the while he is oblivious to such punishment.

I wonder at a person of contradictions; he indulges himself in a sinful desire and then pleases his Lord with an act of worship before starting to count his deeds into two groups; saying this is a good deed and that is a misdeed!

I say, 'Woe to such a person!' It is his balance that he is wasting and it is his merchandise that he is ruining and it is his honour that he puts to disgrace! Indeed a small wound may kill a person and a small slip may cause the destruction of a man. A person may commit a minor sin but never be able to avoid its consequences.

I say, 'Woe to such a person!' Be mindful. What are you waiting for so that you may turn to Allāh in repentance?

Do you want to wait until you age and see the grey hair?

It is about time as there is nothing after the death of the wife, children and relatives except your turn to follow them.

Assuming you have achieved all that which you want to have in this life, then ask yourself, 'then what?' Either the wishes you have fulfilled were instant, resulting in keeping you busy and the last sip of all these pleasure makes you choke, or you end up departing from

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ful for them can be considered a shortcoming unlike the common and laypeople. This point is mentioned while hypothetically assuming that this report about the number of their children is valid and that is something cannot be verified as such news reached us through the reports of the people of the Books.

your loved ones or your loved ones departing from you. Indeed that is one bitter sip making you wish that you never had!

I wonder at a person whose intellect cannot assist him in contemplating, and I wonder at a person who cannot drink a sip of water though he can see a spring of water right in front of him! Does he not find the graves around him standing as enough warnings?

Does not he find the changes in people's condition enough as an admonisher? Where are those who ruled the world? Have they reached what they hoped for? Call them if they could hear you now! But never, they are deaf after their death! Was it only death that would occur to them, their graves would have been a place of comfort for them! But never, it is punishment that awaits them after death, which will make their stay disastrous.

O you who was nothing yesterday and who will perish tomorrow! I urge you to spare no effort to do good deeds, for how would you meet your Lord with all the sins you have committed?! Are the pleasures you attain from your sinful desires worth hearing a single word of blame in the Hereafter? By Allāh, if showing mercy after blame may not be enough to remove the feelings of bitterness from the heart; how would it be the case if punishment follows the blame?

Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Al-Sayrafī related, "One of my neighbours saw Yaḥyā Ibn Aktham in his dream after he died, and so he asked him, 'What did Allāh do with you?' He replied, 'I stood before Him and He said to me, 'What a bad outcome is waiting for you old man!' I said, 'O Lord! Your Messenger said You will not punish your believing slaves who died in their eighties. I am Your captive on Earth and one of those! He said, 'My Messenger has said the truth. I have pardoned you.'"'[147]

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[147] It refers to a very weak report found in *Musnad* Aḥmad, 2/89.

In another report, it says that he said, "Allāh made me stand before Him then said to me, O evil old man! Was it not for the grey hair you have, I would have burned you in Hell."

The intended meaning of all that I said is to contemplate the reality of sins to understand whether repenting from sins is enough to let us enter Paradise—and to make us understand the reality of the pleasures of this worldly life.

I ask Allāh, Exalted is He, to wake us up from the state of heedlessness and to show us the reality of all things so we can know the defects of sins.

And Allāh is the Guide to Success.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-ONE

Whoever Fears Allāh, He Will Make a Way Out for Him

I was in a difficult situation that made me distressed all the times, and I exerted all my power to think of every possible way to rid these worries and concerns but without any joy! I then recalled the verse,

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ۝٢

"Whoever fears Allāh, He will make for him a way out."
[*al-Talāq* (65):2]

and so I knew that fearing Allāh is the means whereby every concern and distress is removed. I acted upon the Verse and fulfilled the requirements of fearing Allāh and so I found a way out.

No person should ever rely on, or think of anything except having obedience to Allāh and acting upon His Commands as this is the only means whereby hardship is lifted. It is even more pleasant when such ease comes from a means that a person never had thought of despite how resourceful he happens to be; just as the verse, says,

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

> "And He will provide for him from where he does not expect."
>
> [*al-Ṭalāq* (65):3]

A person who fears Allāh should know that Allāh is sufficient for him and hence he should not let his heart be attached to the means and causes, for Allāh, Most High, said,

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُۥٓ

> "And whoever relies upon Allāh—then He is sufficient for him."
>
> [*al-Ṭalāq* (65):3]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-TWO

The Wisdom behind Delaying Answer of Supplications

I wonder at how persistent you are when it comes to asking Allāh all that you want! The more your supplications are unlikely to be answered the more persistent you become! Yet you seem to forget that your supplication is not answered because either that will be for your own good as you may ask for what may harm you, or due to your sins for the ones with sins are far from having their wishes answered.

Consequently cleanse the roads leading to the answer from all the dirt of sins and then look into what you are asking for, whether it is good for your religion or just a mere desire.

If it was the latter, then you should know it is from the Mercy of Allāh and His Kindness that request is not answered. When you become persistent in asking for it you become like a child insisting on having what harms him but he is not allowed to have it in order to protect him. And if it is for the sake of your religion, then perhaps it is the best to have it postponed or even not have it granted to you.

Overall, the planning of Allāh for you is certainly better than the plans you have set for your own self. He may avert what you wish to test you, so show Him the good patience (*sabr al-jamīl*) you have and then you will see what will please your heart.

Whenever you cleanse the roads leading to the answer from the dirt of sins and endure all that He decreed for you patiently, you will understand whatever happens to you is better for you whether you were granted something or prevented from something.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-THREE

Hasten to Repent Before Death Strikes You

No person is aware when his moment of death (*mawt*) will arrive. Each person is ought to be well prepared and not be fooled with his youthfulness and health because many of the deaths occur among the younger ones, and rare to find people aging.

It is foolish for a person to have wishful thinking about living a long life as such notion is indeed from the worst of all diseases. Was it not for the thinking that one will live long; no one would have ever neglected their duties, yet such notions lead a person rushing towards sins and delaying repentance (*tawbah*); hastening to fulfil desires (*shahawāt*) and forgetting to turn to Allāh.

If you are unable to avoid having such mindset [to think that you may die any moment] then act as a person with such mindset; thus when the night comes, review all what you have done during the day so that if you find a sin in your record then wipe it out with repentance, and if you found a hole in your record to patch it by asking Allāh's forgiveness (*istighfār*). And when the morning comes, think of what you have done during the night and beware of procrastination (*taswīf*) for it is the highest ranking soldier of *Iblīs*.

Think of how much remorse (*nadm*) and regret (*tafrīt*) a person will have when on his deathbed for all that he has overlooked and neglected, and keep in mind that life is too short, while worldly affairs are far too many.

In contrast, think of the perfect reward compared to the less reward you will receive due to your imperfection, and the reward of those who worked hard as opposed to your reward when you are lazy.

Do not keep your *"self"* unwary for any moment of time for it is a rebellious horse, so do not let go the rein for you do not know when it will throw you off its back. Ensure to spare no preaching that your 'self' should hear or speech that you can keep it busy.

Otherwise, by Allāh, you will be debased with your fanciful desires. You will have wasted your life in vain. Hasten therefore to save the time remaining from your life before it is ruined, wasted in your fanciful desires and sin! Indeed many resolute persons fell in the trap of desires and many intoxicated persons fell in an endless hole.

There is no power and strength except in Allāh, alone.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FOUR

Beware of Sins for Consequences are Severe

Beware! Beware again of sins (*ma‘āṣī*) for the consequences are drastic (*sai’*)!

Aside from crippling one’s endeavours in this worldly life and suffering poverty and misery resulting from not possessing some worldly pleasures—with every sin a person commits, the further he falls down.

Woe to sinners!

If their punishment for the ugly and vile acts they committed is about to finish, their objection of what Allāh decreed for them not to have from this worldly life will reignite their punishment! Woe to a person who is being punished but cannot realise so! Woe to a person who cannot remember the sin because of which he is punished just because the punishment was postponed for a long time.

Ibn Sirīn said, ‘I dispraised a person due to his poverty (*faqr*), and because of that I became poor after forty years from that incident.’

Ibn Al-Jallā said, 'I looked at a handsome person, and because of that I forgot the Qur'ān I memorised after forty years from that incident.'

Woe to a person who is being punished but does not know that the biggest punishment is actually not feeling that he is being punished. Hasten to repent as it may avert the punishment.

Beware of sins, particularly the sins committed in private, because of which Allāh will not heed to you. Rectify the relationship you have with Him in privacy and He will rectify your affairs in public.

O sinner! Do not be fooled with the fact He covers your shortcomings and sins, for He may expose you to the public. And do not be fooled with His forbearance for He may punish you at any moment.

Be concerned (*qaliq*) and return to Allāh with humility (*tadar'*) for if anything can benefit you, it will be this. Let sorrow (*ḥuzn*) be your food and tears be your drink, and dig out the heart of desires (*qalb al-hawā*) with the axe of remorse, as only then you may unearth some water that can wash off the dirt of your disobedience.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FIVE

The Encompassing Mercy of Allāh

O my brothers! Heed to the advice (*naṣiḥa*) of he who has experience and firsthand knowledge (*'ilm*).

The more love you have for Allāh, the more love He will show you in return. The more glorifications (*ta'ẓim*) you have for Him, the more He will elevate you and protect you.

I have seen some people who spent their lives learning knowledge until they become old, and then they crossed the line [with Allāh] so as a consequence, people start to undermine them and ignore them despite the great knowledge and strong capacity (*quwa al-mujāhada*) they have.

In contrast, I saw some people who were mindful of Allāh in their actions during their youth—despite their lack of knowledge compared to the aforementioned learned ones—and as a consequence, Allāh made their status glorified in the hearts of people until their hearts loved them and narrated about them all goodness.

Furthermore, I see some people whose affairs are rectified and in a good state as long they are on the right path, but as soon as they deviate so does their state of condition change accordingly.

Was it not for the encompassing Mercy of Allāh and His covering their shortcomings, the people I have mentioned would be exposed! Yet in most cases, when He punishes them, His punishment is gentle enough or less severe than they deserve just to discipline them. As one poet said:

> He whose kindness manifests when he is Angry
> How do you imagine He would be when He is pleased.

Allāh is the Most Just and is never unjust, His Judgement is ultimately just and nothing will He ever overlook.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SIX

Stay in the Niche of Repentance Even if the Sought Comfort is Late

O sinner! If your skin started to feel the breeze of punishment, do not cry out loud and then say, "I have repented and am remorseful, so when will this punishment be removed?!" It is possible your repentance did not fulfil the required conditions and so was not accepted!

The period of punishment is too long, thus it cannot be avoided until it expires. The period of time between the disobedience of Adam[148] and the moment he received the word of acceptance of his repentance[149] was too long.

O sinner, remain patient because you will only be purified from the impurity that has debased your heart until after the waters of your eyes wash off the dirt from the garment of your heart; and the hands of remorse wringed it enough so that afterward you wash it over and over again.

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[148] See *Surah Taha* (20): 121

[149] See *Surah al-Baqarah* (2): 37

Take the examples of Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) who remained in tears for three-hundred years for the sin he committed,[150] and Ayyūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) who suffered for eighteen years,[151] and Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) who cried eighty years for the loss of his son Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*).

While tests and hardships are meant to stay for a while then disappear, there is a possibility for a punishment to last until a person passes away. That being the case, stay in the niche of repentance (*inābah*), sit in the posture of a beggar, let apprehension be your food and tears be your drink so that maybe then, the bearer of glad tiding (of your repentance being accepted) arrives so you can rejoice just as Ya'qūb rejoiced much to the point he had his eye sight returned.

If you remain in sorrow and die in the prison of your anxiety (*ḥuzn*), maybe the anxiousness you suffered in this life relieve you from the anxiousness of the Hereafter, and that is indeed a great gain.

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[150] Al-Haythamī said in *al-Majma'*, 8/198, it is reported by Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsat.*

[151] Abū Ya'la, 6/299 and al-Haythamī, 8/208.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SEVEN

Beware of Outcome of Sins

An intelligent person needs to beware of the outcome of sin (*maghabbat al-ma'āṣī*) for its fire hides underneath the ashes.

The punishment (*'aqūba*) may be postponed but then it strikes out hard all of a sudden. A person should hasten to extinguish the fires of sins (*dhunūb*) that he ignited and nothing can put fire out except the water of eyes (i.e. tears of remorse) so that the One whom you disobeyed may forgive before He rules the punishment.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-EIGHT

Blaming the *"Self"* that Inclines to Evil Persistently

I wonder at a person who knows his Lord but still disobeys Him even if that will cause his destruction!

Indeed, life cannot be except with Him and truly this life and the Hereafter are His to own!

Woe to a person who allows himself to do what Allāh dislikes just to attain what he likes! By Allāh, the pleasure he lost is times the pleasure he attained. Heed to the words I say, O intelligent man! Have you noticed how your life becomes disturbed and difficult only when you disobey Him?! Did you not know the story of one of the righteous predecessors who narrated that he saw a young man in the city of Beirut remembering Allāh, Most High, so I said to him, 'do you need anything?' He replied: 'If I ever need something, I ask from my Lord in my heart and He will fulfil it for me.'

O worshippers! I ask for Allāh's sake not to pollute the water your drink from! Guard the gate of minding Allāh [in all your affairs] (*muraqaba*) and prevent anything that is inappropriate from entering the gate [into your heart]. Abandon your wants and desires for the sake of doing what your Loved one loves, and He will suffice you and fulfil your wants.

I say: 'How pitiful it is when a person leaves something for the hope of receiving a reward! This contravenes the true state of servitude [to Allāh] (*'ubudiyya*) because a servant obeys just to please his master and not so that he receives a reward. Yet if you are truthful and really love Him, then discard all your wants, your wishes and concentrate on pleasing Him.

O you whose purpose deceives him, heed to my advice! When you are unable to handle His trials then seek His Help. When you are in pain due to the choice He made for you, remember that you are standing before Him, and do not despair from His Mercy even if the grip of hardship becomes harder on you. Indeed, when a servant dies during his service, it is something that intelligent people consider a praiseworthy act [for it shows committed determination].

O my brothers! I will now address my *"self"* (*nafs*) but whoever would like to drink with me from the same cup, let him join in:

O self! Allāh granted you what you never thought to have and gave you what you have not asked for. He covered your ugly defects and shortcoming whose smell would have disturbed the noses if they had a smell! Yet despite all that, you whine for not attaining everything you want!

Do you think you are under no control or do you forget that you are a servant [of Allāh]? Do you not understand that you are placed in a world where you have to fulfil duties He Ordained? This advice should be given to the ignorant, so where is the knowledge you claim to have? Tell me, would you still enjoy this life if you are made blind?

I really pity you! The insight (*baṣīra*) of your heart has become blind though it is more statuesque than the sight of your eyes. I kept giving you excuses saying you may return or perhaps you come to realise but you moved forward with your err.

The ship of life is about to dock on the wharf of your grave while you still have no merchandise that you can gain some profit from. The wind of weakness played with the sea of life causing the exhaustion of your strength. The ship is docking and life is about to end, all the while, your eyes still look at the times of youthfulness!

I ask you for the sake of Allāh, not to let your enemies gloat! This is the least request I bring forth but it is even more fulfilling to demand from you, for the sake of Allāh, not to stay behind in the race when you are able to win the race!

Resort to solitude (*khalwa*) and bring along your sense of intellect (*'aql*) to then wander in the world of thoughts (*fikar*) making a win before your time ends and before the urge of youth deviates you from the truth.

I wonder at you! The further you advance in age the lower in rank you become, and when death becomes more serious and close at hand, the more ridiculous you become!

Is it possible that your life will conclude with a tempting trial, and towards the end of your life it was decreed you endure a hardship?! Truly the beginning of your life is much better than its end....you were better when young than you are now after old age.

وَتِلۡكَ ٱلۡأَمۡثَٰلُ نَضۡرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِۖ وَمَا يَعۡقِلُهَآ إِلَّا ٱلۡعَٰلِمُونَ

"And these examples We present to the people, but none

> will understand them except those of knowledge."
>
> [*al-'Ankabut* (29):43]

I ask Allāh, Glorified be He, to grant me what cannot be achieved except with His Permission; His Guidance towards success, indeed He is All Hearing and All Answering.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-NINE

Whoever Abandons Something for the Sake of Allāh will be compensated with Something Better

I once had the power and ability to access a desire (*shahwa*) that my *"self"* found to be better than fresh water in the mouth of a thirsty person.

My sense of interpretation corroborated with my wish by saying there was nothing forbidden about the desire you can have, but it's just a matter of righteousness (*wara'*) that keeps you away from it!

It however, appeared to be unlawful for me to attain the said desire, thus making me hesitant about which side to take. I decided to avoid the desire I could have attained; my *'self'* wondering why I prevented it from accessing what it sought.

So I said, "O self! By Allāh, there is no way for you to attain what you desire or even less than that!"

This made my *'self'* become disturbed, so I yelled at it and said, 'How many times I agreed to comply with your wishes yet the pleasures attained are all gone, with only the regret for indulging in such pleasures remaining! Do you not see if you attain the pleasures of your desires, regret is multiple times the pleasures attained! In response, the '*self*' asked, 'what should I do then?'

I answered with a line of poetry:

> I was patient, though by Allāh, I have no patience...
> over love but still I became patient despite that.

Here I am now waiting in earnest to receive Allāh's reward for this deed; therefore I will leave this section blank until I receive the reward for my patience so that I can record down the reward I receive, by the permission of Allāh Most High. This is because He may hasten or postpone the reward of patience (*ṣabr*); if it is hastened, I will write it down here, and if it is postponed then I have no doubt the reward of one who fears his Lord will be nothing but good because whoever leaves a matter for the sake of Allāh, He will compensate him with something better.

By Allāh, I only abstained from that desire for His sake alone and it suffices me to have this deed as a saving so that if late (on the Day of Judgment) I am asked, 'when did you favour the obedience of Allāh over your own self desires?' I can say, 'it happened on such and such day'.

That being the case, '*O self*' be proud for being successful and praise the One who guided you to success, for there are many who were failed!

Beware of failure in such matters! There is no power or strength except in Allāh, the High and Mighty.

This incident happened in year 561 AH and when the year 565 AH commenced, I was compensated with something better that even righteousness does not prevent me from attaining it.

I said this must be the reward I receive in this worldly life for leaving a matter for the sake of Allāh, and the reward in the Hereafter is even better.

All praise is to Allāh alone.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY

Do Not Pay a Lifetime of Humiliation for a Moment of Joy

I do not criticise anyone who seeks worldly pleasures (*ladhat*) through lawful means because not everyone is able to abstain totally from worldly pleasures. I do condemn however, those who look for worldly pleasures but when they can't find what they are after—or realise they can only obtain it through unlawful means—they endeavour to attain these pleasures regardless of the means.

This trial takes place when a person undermines his intellect and does not benefit from his intelligence because if he weighed the sinful desire he favoured comparing it against the punishment awaiting for attaining it, he would have realised the scale of desire weigh anything because it was a moment of pleasure that vanished as soon as it was consumed or utilised. Many are those who favour their desires and as a result they become devoid of their religiousness!

An intelligent person who flips the pages of their states and conditions must wonder at them because they favoured a pleasure that does not last, and ended up with a punishment that does not leave them! How disgraceful it is when the sense of intellect is undermined!

Let the one who embarked unto the path of righteousness see where he puts his foot, because if one was in a hurry he may fall into a deep hole.

Let the eyes of awakening be wide open for you are in a state of war where no one can expect from whence the arrows are coming, so help your *'self'* and not do strive against it.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-ONE

True Obedience is Complying with Allāh's Commands and Avoiding His Prohibitions

Allāh, the Most High, is closer to His slaves than their jugular veins, yet He defined the relation between Him and His slaves to be like how a person deals with a person far away from himself.

He ordered His slaves to visit His House (in Makkah) and raise their hands to ask Him for what they want. The hearts of the ignorant sense the distance and so they fall in sins because if they were mindful of Allāh's presence as if they could see Him, they would have abstained from sins.

In contrast, the heedful ones know that He is close to them and so they become mindful of Him and that makes them refrain from transgressing His boundaries.

If they were not been made incapable of seeing Him in reality in this life, they would have not stretched their hands to consume a single bite of (*ḥaram*) food or refrained their eyes from looking at anything wrong.

The latter meaning manifests in the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said, "My heart sometimes becomes absent from the remembrance of Allāh."[152]

Whenever a person is mindful of Allāh, amiability is present because amiability occurs when obedience is maintained, while disobedience calls forth insipidity. Conforming to Allāh's Commands makes those who are affable with Allāh's company to rejoice. It is truly a great pleasure with which the affable live and a great loss for the gloomy ones!

Obedience of Allāh is not as what most of the ignorant presume, thinking it is about praying and fasting (only). It is in fact to abide by Allāh's entire Ordinance i.e. performing all of His Orders and abstain from all of His Prohibitions.

This is the foundational and principle rule! Many worshippers happen to be far from Allāh, despite their worship because they neglect this great principle and oppose the rules of religion by opposing the orders and committing the forbidden.

The one with sound understanding who investigates the truth is he who holds the forehead of his own accountability (*muḥāsaba*) and starts putting him into account. Therefore he performs what Allāh orders and avoids what Allāh forbids. If he was blessed enough to perform optional acts of worship, that will be good, otherwise it will not harm him not doing so.

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[152] Muslim, #2702

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-TWO

Do not Contemplate the Pleasures of this World for they are debased with Imperfection

This worldly life is altogether merely a (temporal) passage so a person should not indulge in its pleasures, but rather set out such pleasures to help him pass the days until he reaches the end of it.

If a person thinks for one second about how animals are slaughtered and the filth the slaughterer is covered with during the process—and how the food is then prepared—he will never enjoy the meal. And if he thinks of the process of chewing food and how it mixes with one's own saliva, he could not eat it.

A person can be one of two; either a person who wants to lavish himself with lawful worldly pleasures (*ladhāt*); or a person who wants to use such pleasures to pass the time considering these worldly pleasures necessary for that.

Regardless of which type a person is, he should not look at the concealed bodily parts he has for if a man glances at the genitals of his wife, he would be turned off. 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anha*) said, "Neither I nor the Prophet (ﷺ) ever saw the private parts of each other."[153] For that reason, an intelligent person should have particular times his wife knows about, so she can beautify herself for him; and not to investigate further than what is apparent so he does not find anything he might dislike.

This will make the lives of both spouses good and (mutually) maintained. If the wife does not look after herself, shortcomings will become apparent leading to her husband being turned off and causing him to look for another wife and so forth. The same is requested also from the husband who needs to look his best and adorn himself for her just like she does for him, so both can live in harmony and their love lasts.

If these directions are ignored and the husband notices (unbearable) negative aspects in his wife, the result will be either neglect of the wife or his seeking another marriage. If he starts to avoid and neglect her, he will in turn have to suppress his sexual desires if there are no other lawful women he can be with. If he starts to look for another wife, he will need money so in both cases he is put at a disadvantage.

Whoever does not follow the directions and guidelines I have previously mentioned, he will not be able to live this life smoothly.

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[153] *Musnad* Aḥmad, #190, it is weak.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-THREE

“If you should count the favour of Allāh, you could not enumerate them.”[154]

There was a time when my desirous *‘self’* enticed me to do something that is disliked in religion. It started luring me through providing interpretations and justifications to show me that there is nothing dislikeable in what it wants to do. All the interpretations and justifications furnished were invalid however, and it is evident that the matter is disliked. I consequently turned to Allāh, Most High, asking Him to let my heart disincline to that matter. I started to recite the Qur’ān, and commenced to recite from the last place I ended; it was the beginning of *Surah Yūsuf*, all the while what my desirous ‘self’ wanted was distracting my heart to the point I become unfocused while reading. As soon as I reached the verse,

قَالَ مَعَاذَ ٱللَّهِ إِنَّهُۥ رَبِّىٓ أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَاىَ

> “He said, ‘[I seek] the refuge of Allāh. Indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence.’”
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):23]

I became astute as if this verse intended to address me, which made me wake up from the intoxication of the desirous thought I had. At that point, I addressed my desirous self by saying, "O self! Have you understood?

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[154] *Surah Ibrāhīm* (14): 34

Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) was sold as a slave unjustly but still he fulfilled the right of the 'Azīz who showed kindness to him and referred to him as his master though he is not really his master!

So, how about you when you know that you are a real slave for a Master whose kindness has been engulfing you from the moment you came into being, the number of times He covered your mistakes and shortcoming is countless?! Do not you remember how He raised you, taught you, sustained you, protected you, brought goodness to you, guided you to the best path, saved you from all the harm, furnished you with a good appearance and good intellect. He facilitated for you acquiring all types of knowledge until you acquired in a short time what no other person could acquire from knowledge in a long time, adorned your tongue with eloquence when speaking about the different branches of knowledge after He concealed your shortcomings from His creation; thus they accepted what you say while assuming the good in you, and let abundant provision come to you without any effort from your end!

By Allāh, I do not know which blessing and grace Allāh has conferred on you should I explain; the good image you have or the health of your senses and limbs? The good mood and moderate structure you have been granted or your nature that is free of any lowly quality? The guidance you have been blessed with since early age or the protection you have that made you avoid sins and vile acts? (Last but not least) the blessing of loving the path of adhering to the Prophet (ﷺ) and following his steps without (being restricted to) rigidly following any other person who is looked up to by people and without being involved in innovations?

وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَآ

> "Indeed, if you should count the favour of Allāh, you could not enumerate them."
>
> [*Ibrāhīm* (14): 34]

How many cunning individuals have attempted to set you up but Allāh protected you?

How many enemies have tried to degrade you but He elevated your rank?

How many are out there who thirst to have any of their wishes be fulfilled, while He extinguishes your thirst for you?

How many are those who died without achieving their purpose but He kept you alive?

You wake up and sleep everyday while your body is healthy and your religion is safeguarded; acquiring more knowledge and achieving what you hope for. And when you are prevented from any one of your wishes, you are granted patience over it after it has become evident to you the wisdom for not having your wish fulfilled; hence you need to submit till you become certain that not proceeding with what you want is better for you.

If I continue to count the blessings and favours of Allāh on you, books will be filled and ink will run out dry while I still have not finished. You know whatever I have not mentioned from the favours of Allāh on you is ever more. All what I have indicated above are not even explained in detail! So how could you do something that your Creator dislikes?!

قَالَ مَعَاذَ ٱللَّهِ إِنَّهُۥ رَبِّىٓ أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَاىَ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُفْلِحُ
ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ٢٣

"...indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed."

[*Yūsuf* (12):23]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-FOUR

Avoid the Doubtful

I do not see anything more dangerous than taking the risk of walking towards the pit hole of the forbidden, for it is often that people fall in it should they dare try to walk around it. Indeed, "he who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein."[155]

One of the respected people known for contemplation once said, "There was a day I was able to enjoy a pleasure that appeared to be forbidden, but also considered permissible since its ruling could be either. I however, overcame my desirous self and refrained from it. Myself (*nafs*) said to me, 'The reason you are not agreeable to enjoying this pleasure is because you are unable to get your hands on it. If however, you can take what you can get your hands on and then thereafter leave it; this would mean you really left it for the sake of Allāh.'

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[155] That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honour, but he who falls into doubtful matters [eventually] falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly Allāh's sanctuary is His prohibitions. Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh, which, if it be whole, all the body is whole, and which, if it is diseased, all of [the body] is diseased. Truly, it is the heart. Reported by both Bukhārī and Muslim

After I agreed to what it suggested my desirous self began to give me a different interpretation to show me how it is permissible to enjoy that doubtful pleasure. I agreed with the possibility it suggested to me, but that made me to feel darkness in my heart as I feared it could be forbidden. Because of that I came to realise that my desirous self sometimes manages to overpower me with its interpretation and leniency but at other times, I manage to overpower it with my resistance and striving. I know if I agree to be lenient and accept its questionable ruling, then I will always fear it is possible to be forbidden, not to mention the instant impact this would have on my heart. For this reason, I could not trust or accept the interpretation and justifications of my desirous self.

To this effect, I decided to end its hope in having any influence over me, and the only way to do so was by saying to it, 'I will play along with you and assume it is permissible, but nevertheless, I swear by Allāh, the One and only deity worthy of worship, I will never accept to do it again. This oath made it give up on convincing me indulge in such questionable matters again. I find this to be the best cure to end its influence because the best it can do after this is to tell me to break my oath.

Indeed, the best thing to do is to put an end to all the causes leading to doubtful matters and avoid being lenient as so not to accept the permissible if it will lead to the impermissible.

And Allāh is the One who gives success.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-FIVE

The Barrier of Desires and the Unconscious Sinners

Was it not for the unconsciousness of the sinner when committing sins, he would have resisted. Yet his desires (*hawa*) stand between him and understanding the situation; therefore in that state he can only think of fulfilling his desires because if sinners intend to oppose and disobey Allāh intentionally, they would stand outside the fold of Islām.

Sinners only want to fulfil their desires without really intending to disobey Allāh; hence their disobedience manifests accordingly. This is often noticed when a person steps in the zone of the doubtful because it is rare to find a person coming out safe as it is like bringing fire close to a green leaf.

If an intelligent person would think when intending to commit a sin that fulfilling a sinful desire takes just a minute whereas regret and remorse following the sin will remain with him for the rest of his life, he would never dare go near the sin even if he is offered all the treasures of the world. But, it is the intoxication of desires that keeps the mind away from thinking with clarity and sensibly.

How many sins have we committed that passed in seconds as if they never happened, but their bitterness remained behind with us?

The ultimate safety is to avoid anything that may lead to sins and not to be close to it.

Whoever understands this and takes all the precautions, he will be closer to the shore of safety.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-SIX

The Trial of Those with High Endeavour

Severity of trials befalling people is according to their ranks. You observe many people being pleased and content with their share from piety (*wara'*) and worldly pleasures (*ladhāt*). This group is either not destined to reach the higher ranks of forbearance (*maqāmāt al-ṣabr al-rafī'a*), or is known to be too weak to forebear trials and so Allāh made it easy on them.

The greatest trial is that Allāh endows you with high endeavour (*himma 'āliya*), which makes you never settle for anything less than achieving full piety and perfecting your religion (*dīn*) and knowledge (*'ilm*); but you happen to have a desirous self that inclines towards the lawful and claims it only seeks the lawful so it can be focused afterward to achieve all the virtues.

However, this cannot be because each from this worldly life and the Hereafter stand on a different side. Therefore a person needs to heed to the priority of fulfilling the obligations (*wājib*) and not to give room for the self to operate in the premises of the lawful so it does not neglect an obligation or overlook piety afterwards. The one who is trialled with is ought to cry out because it's better that it is the child who cries out and not the father.

Know that opening the door of the permissible (*bāb al-mubāhāt*) is to indulge in it, this may bring forth much harm to the religion. It is for this reason you should make sure to seal the bottle before the water leaks, wear the shield before the fight, heed to the consequences of what you will earn before working, and be always cautious of what could lead to harm even if you are not certain of it.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-SEVEN

Beneficial Tips for Students of Knowledge

Every student of knowledge (*ṭālib al-ʿilm*) ought to dedicate his whole time in memorisation (*ḥifẓ*) and revision (*iʿādah*), but that is not possible in reality because the body is like a vehicle and exhausting it will lead to break-down.

Since the strength of people decreases over time it needs to be reenergised, and since what matters is copying books, reading and authoring are required though memorisation. One should divide his time between two things—the first of which is to memorise in the early mornings and in the early nights. Then dedicate sometime between copying books in writing, reading, resting and take care of his affairs.

One should be fair and give each task its due time otherwise injustice will instantly manifest. Especially since the *'self'* escapes from revision and repeating, wanting to writing and reading because it is an easier and a lighter task.

The rider of the camel should not neglect his camel and should not carry on its back more than can be handled because with justice (*'adl*) come achievements.

And whoever deviates from the right path, his journey will take longer. Whoever prefers a shortcut then he will miss what he is after. So a person needs to be encouraged because people are more inclined to laziness.

That being said, knowledge requires high endeavour for verily a person seeking the knowledge of ḥadīth may memorise twenty routes for the ḥadīth, "whoever attends Friday Prayer, let him perform ghusl" while the ḥadīth is proven authentic from one route, yet that kept him too busy to learn the etiquettes of bathing.

Life is too short and precious to waste any moment. One's intellect is an enough guide to find the correct way.

And with Allāh is all success.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-EIGHT

One Who Reforms His Interior, Allāh Elevates His Rank

When the intent of a scholar is correct, then one who is under legal responsibility finds comfort in this? Many scholars disdain from saying: 'I do not know', allowing themselves to protect their position by issuing verdicts (*fatawa*), so it will not be said that they were ignorant from answering the question, although they may not be certain of their answer. This is the height of betrayal (*nahāya al-khudhlan*).

It is narrated that a person asked Imām Mālik about a matter, and he replied: 'I do not know". The man said: "I have travelled the whole land to meet you for this.' Imām Mālik stated, 'Return to your city and tell the people that I asked Imām Mālik and he replied: 'I do not know.'

Look at this person and his intelligence (*'aql*), how comfortably he absolved himself of the responsibility and became safe before Allāh, the Almighty. On the other hand, if their (scholars') goal is attaining position, then their hearts are in other people's hands.

By Allāh, I have seen those who pray (*salah*), fast (*sawm*) and remain quiet (*samt*) abundantly. They show humility in them selves and in their clothing. However, their hearts reveal everything, and their value in the hearts of people is otherwise. I have also seen those who wear expensive clothing, they are not that devoted, nor of those committing voluntary acts (of worship) in abundance, yet the hearts of people fall in love with them.

I pondered over the reason and found none but their interior (i.e. purity of inner self).

One who has reformed his interior, the fragrance of his grace (*faḍl*) emits everywhere, and the hearts spread his sweet smell everywhere.

Fear Allāh regarding the inner feelings (*sarā'ir*), because having a good exterior on it's own, cannot benefit while the interior (*ẓāhir*) is corrupt.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-NINE

Causes of Delay in the Acceptance of Supplications

I once fell into hardship and consequently increased in making supplication (*du'ā'*), asking Allāh for the uplifting of hardship and obtaining ease (*rāḥa*). The answer to the prayers was delayed, so the *'self'* (*nafs*) became frustrated and worried! I shouted at it: "Woe to you, consider your own self, are you someone whom is possessed (by another) or are you the one who possesses and are you free?! Are you the planner or one who follows a plan?

Did you know that the world is a place of test and exam? When you have demanded your interests and you were impatient over those things that go against your wishes, then where is the meaning of test? Is the test not the meaning of impediment (*i'rāḍ*) and opposition of aims (*akṣ al-maqāṣid*)?

So understand the meaning of legal responsibility in Sharee'ah. Indeed now the difficult things have become easy and the complicated made simple.

When the *'self'* pondered over what I said to it, it becomes relaxed to some extent. I responded with a second answer too, 'You are demanding your rights due to your interests and yet you are not demanding that you accomplish what is obligated upon it (self) by Him (The Creator). This is sheer ignorance (*jahl*).'

It was meant to be the contrary because you are owned, and an intelligent owned servant demands himself to accomplish the right of his master first, while he is aware that his master is not duty-bound to grant him what he wishes. So the *'self'* became at ease more than before.

I then continued, 'I have a third answer also. It is you who actually asked for the delay in answering of the supplication since you closed its roads by committing sins. If you left the road open, then it would be answered quickly. This is due to the fact you did not acknowledge that the cause of comfort is the adoption of *taqwā* (acute piety that lies in being aware of Allāh).'

Have you not heard the statement of Allāh,

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

> "And whoever fears Allāh—He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect."
>
> [*al-Ṭalāq* (65): 2]

and

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مِنْ أَمْرِهِۦ يُسْرًا ﴿٤﴾

> "And whoever fears Allāh—He will make for him of his matter ease."
>
> [*al-Ṭalāq* (65): 4]

Did you not understand that opposite is repaid by doing the opposite? Ah! From the intoxication of an unmindful (*sukr al-ghafla*) state that has become more powerful than all the intoxications in the face of attainment, which impedes reaching the seeded plantation of aspirations. The *'self'* acknowledged that this is the ultimate truth, leading to its self-satisfaction.

Then I told the self, 'I have a fourth answer as well. It is that you are seeking something not knowing what shall be its outcome. Many times, its outcome ends out to be harmful. Thus, you are like a feverish child who asks for sweets, whereas your guardian knows more about your welfare—why would not it be the case when He has already stated,

وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تَكۡرَهُواْ شَيۡـٔٗا وَهُوَ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡۖ

"But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you."

[*al-Baqarah* (2):216]

When the right answer became apparent for the self's contentment (*tamāninah*) grew.'

Thereafter I told it, 'I have a fifth answer too. This request decreases a portion from your reward and degrades you from your status. The denial of your rights, which is His prerogative, is in reality His bestowal of His favour to you. If you begged for those favours that repair your Hereafter, this would be more preferable for you. It is better for you to understand what I just explained."

The *'self'* replied, 'I have strolled in the gardens of your explanation. I have understood the intent very well.'

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY

Independence of a Scholar from People's Wealth is an Honour to the Sacred Knowledge and its People

We attended a few invitations of wealthy people and we found that the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) were the most humiliated people in their presence. They degrade in places of their greed for them, whereas the wealthy do not have any regard for them for they know that it is they who need them.

I saw this as a defect (*ʿayb*) in both parties:

As in the case of the worldly men (*ahl al-dunyā*), the cause of defect is that they were ought to magnify the knowledge (*taʿẓeem al-ʿilm*), but unfortunately, due to their ignorance (*jahl*) of its worth, they missed out on that opportunity. They ended up giving preference of earning wealth to acquiring knowledge (*ʿilm*). Therefore, ultimately, there is no reason to seek their regard for that which they do not even acknowledge its worth.

In conclusion, I turn my criticism to the scholars and tell them, 'It is important to protect yourselves, who have been endowed with knowledge, from being humiliating (*dhul*) before these scoundrels. If you are truly independent from them, then your servility to them and begging from them would be prohibited for you.

And if you are self-subsistent, then why do you not prefer refraining from humiliation, by showing satisfaction and independence from acquiring favours and degrading oneself.

Otherwise, I think I have acknowledged the self's impatience (*sabr al-nafs*) with becoming self-subsistent and disinclining from luxuries. If this attitude is found in the self at a time, then it is not found in it continuously.

It is therefore better for the scholar to try his best in acquiring wealth and earning his living, even if this makes him lose plenty of time that would otherwise be spent in acquiring knowledge.

This will eventually help him protect his honour and integrity through his wealth.

Saʿīd Ibn al-Mūsayyib used to trade in olive oil and he left behind wealth.

Sufyān al-Thawrī left wealth behind and used to say: 'If it were not for you [oh wealth], they would use me as a handkerchief.'

It has already been mentioned in one of the chapters of my book about the privilege of having wealth (*sharf al-māl*) and the accounts of scholars and the Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) acquiring it. The secret (*sirr*) in this and in my encouragement for my students in doing so, is that the self cannot remain steadfast on abstinence (*taʿaffaf*) and remain patient on renunciation (*tazahhud*) for too long.

How many times have we seen someone whose confidence has been strengthened in seeking the Hereafter. He used up his wealth, then after his strength weakened he resorted to earning wealth in a more humiliating manner.

It is better then, to save wealth and become independent from people. Greed will be removed from the heart and the spreading of knowledge becomes purer from the defect of desire.

One who ponders over the lives of the best among the learned, will find them on this path.

Only the one who has lacklustre approach to earning has not considered the importance of saving the nobility of his religion and honour. So he sought comfort—which in a way—turned out to be exhaustion, just as some ignorant Ṣūfīs did by spending what they possessed and then claiming reliance of Allāh. They did not realise that earning does not conflict with true reliance on Allāh. They sought thereby only to obtain comfort and they ultimately took to begging as a means of earning.

This way comprises of two things: decrease in self-esteem and knowledge.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-ONE

Pondering over the Greatness of the Creator Prevents Disobedience

I pondered over those who commit sins and found that their goal is not the sin itself, but rather its agreement with their desire, with the actual sin being a consequence of that. I gathered the reasons of this action, which takes place with clear sight of one's opposition to it (i.e. the sin), and found that they really don't consider the generosity of their Creator and His Grace.

Had they really pondered over His greatness (*'aẓuma*) and grandiose (*hayba*), their hands would be tied from opposing Him.

It is thus paramount to be cautious against opposing the Creator whose smallest Will is to generalise His creation with death, inflicting children with sickness, impoverishing the scholar (*faqr al-'ulamā'*) and enriching the ignorant (*ghanā al-jahl*).

The one who puts himself forward to commit sins, should be precautious of the Being Who possesses this quality, as Allāh has said,

وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسَهُۥ

"And Allāh warns you about Himself."

[*Āl-'Imrān* (3): 28]

Taking consideration of the causes of fear is closer to safety than taking account of the causes of hope (*asbāb al-rajā'*).

A fearful person takes asceticism into consideration, whereas, a hopeful person hangs on the rope of greed (*habl al-tam'*). Sometimes the opposite of what was thought happens to materialise for him.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-TWO

Self-restraint (*qanāʿa*) from wanting Worldly Wealth is in fact Protection of Knowledge and its Scholars

I found many from the wealthy people use the scholars and try to humiliate them by giving them pittance from their charitable wealth. If someone has *khatamah* (an event when recitation of the Qur'ān is completed), he says: 'so and so scholar did not turn up.' If someone among the wealthy becomes ill, he says: 'so and so scholar did not pay a visit.' Every favour upon him is a small thing which entails giving him back the same. The scholars have become satisfied here because of the necessity.

I saw this is ignorance on part of the scholars because it is compulsory for them to protect the status of knowledge (*siyāna al-ʿilm*). The remedy for this is of two kinds.

The first kind requires one to be satisfied with the little (*qanāʿa bi'l-yasīr*), as it is said that one who is content with vinegar and vegetables, then no one can enslave him.

The second kind is to divert some of the time engaged in the service of knowledge (*khidma al-ʿilm*) to earning wealth instead. This will be a means of honouring the sacred knowledge (*iʿzāz al-ʿilm*). This is better than spending the whole time in acquiring knowledge, accompanied with forbearing this humiliation.

One who has given the same thoughts as I have, and he has self-esteem, then he has considered his sustenance and treasured what is with him—or he has worked hard in earning what suffices him. One, who has not held his self-esteem high, by falling into these things, has not been privileged with knowledge except its outward appearance, devoid of its meaning.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-THREE

Follow the Qur'ān and Sunnah and do not Blindly Follow Men

The whole issue revolves around the intellect. When the intellect is mature, its possessor does not act upon a deed unless he has the strongest evidence for it. The outcome of the intellect is to understand the statement and glimpse at the objective of the matter.

One who has understood the objective and acted upon the proof, he is like one who builds a strong foundation of a building.

I have seen many people who do not act upon any proof, but they act upon a deed blindly, and in most cases their only proof is customs (and practises). This is a worst case scenario!

I have seen many people not following a proof by establishing it, similar to the Jews and the Christians who follow their forefathers and they do not look up to the Law that they have received to find out whether an act is correct or not. Likewise, they establish the existence of the Creator but do not distinguish between what is ought to be attributed to Him and what is not ought to be. They attribute to Him having a son! And they do not accept the permissibility of

His changing of the Law!

These people have not given a proper thought into establishing the existence of a Creator and what attributes He should possess, neither have they thought hard about the reality of the prophesies. Thus, their actions go to waste, just like he who builds a building on sand.

Upon similar principle are people who worship, adopt abstinence and tire out their bodies by acting upon fabricated reports, and they do not ask the scholars about their validity.

Among such people are those who understand the evidence yet fail to understand the objective of the evidence where it is meant to apply. From this strand is a group of people who hear criticisms about the world, and so they let it go and adopt abstinence, failing to understand its objective.

They assume that the world is evil in and of itself, thus the self should renounce it, therefore they carried upon themselves a burden above what they could bear and punished their selves in every manner. Refusing to take its fortunes—being ignorant of the Prophetic (ﷺ) saying: "Verily yourself has a right upon you."[156]

Among them are those whose personal state drove them to give up obligatory acts of worship, losing body weight and weakening their strength. All this happens because of weak understanding about the objective and short-sightedness about the meaning.

As it is narrated from Dāwūd al-Tā'i that he used keep water in a vessel below the earth. He would drink, while the vessel would be hot.

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[156] Reference already mentioned

He once said to Sufyān, 'If you eat tasty food, and drink cold water, then when will you love death and proceeding to Allāh?!'

This is an utter ignorance (*jahl*) about the objective, because hot water can cause diseases in the body and does not quench the thirst. We have not been commanded to punish ourselves in this way. We have however, been told to give up things that Allāh has prohibited and which the selves are prone to doing.

It is reported in a Ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth[157] that when the shepherd milked the animal, on the road of migration, Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) sprinkled water on the drinking vessel until its bottom became cooler. He then gave the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) water to drink and placed a spread for him under the shade of a rock.

Fresh sweet water would be fetched for the Prophet (ﷺ). It is narrated from him that he (ﷺ) said, "If you have any water remaining from overnight in a skin, [then give us to drink], otherwise we will sip (from a streamlet)."[158]

Had Dāwūd al-Ṭā'i (may Allāh have mercy on him) understood that bettering the fodder for the she-camel is important to be able to undertake journey, he would have never done that!

Do you not see Sufyān al-Thawrī, who was full of knowledge (*shadīd al-ma'rifa*) and God-consciousness (*kawf*), yet he would eat tasty foods and would state, 'If the animal is not treated kindly, it will not function.'

Perhaps some of those who are reading my statement will think that I am showing hostility against the ascetics (*zuhhād*)!

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[157] Bukhārī, #3615 and Muslim, #2009—on the authority of al-Barā' Ibn 'Aazib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

[158] Bukhārī, #5621—on the authority of Jābir (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

I would like to answer them, by saying, "Be with the scholars and look at the ways of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sufyān, Imām Mālik, Imām Abū Ḥanifah, Imām Aḥmad and Imām Shāfi'ī. These are the provenances of Islām.

Do not follow in your religion someone who possesses little knowledge (*qilla al-'ilm*), even if his piety (*taqwā*) is stronger. Entrust his affair to the fact he was capable of doing that and do not follow him in things you are unable to do. Our affairs are not under our authority and our souls are a trust kept with us. If you refuse to accept what I have elucidated, then you belong to a people who have been critical of me.

This is just an indication towards the objective, and if I was to comment further will it only lengthen.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FOUR

Following the Clear and Precise Issues - Leaving the Unclear and Doubtful Ones Alone

It is imperative (*wājib*) for a sane person (*'aql*) to follow the clear proof (*dalīl*) and not to look at something that brings about hardship.

For example, it has been established by irrefutable proof the wisdom of the Creator (*Khāliq*), His kingdom and plan.

So when one sees a scholar who is impoverished and an ignorant that is wealthy, then the proof establishing the wisdom of the Creator should outright impose one to submit to Him, while the inability to understand the wisdom should be asserted to oneself.

A group of people did not do that due to their ignorance! How do you think they made their judgment about this plan? Is this plan not as per the demands of their intellects? Are their intellects not a part of His favours?

How can a judgment be formulated against the Divine wisdom and plan, by using some of his creation, which in respect to His Grandeur, is full of defect?

Ibn al-Rawandī was once sitting on a joist. He had a piece of bread in his hand that he was eating. When some horses and wealth went past, he asked about their owner. He was told, 'that belongs to a certain worshipper.' Then some more horses and wealth went past, he again asked, 'who does that belong to?' He was told that it belonged to that same worshipper.

When the worshipper went past, he threw the piece bread to his side and uttered, 'What is this? This belongs to that certain worshipper? What type of wealth distribution is this?' (i.e. how can it be that the worshipper get so much wealth compared to others).

If this critic thought awhile, some of the reasons would have become clear to him. The least being his ignorance of the Being he claims to have knowledge of and his little magnification of that Being; perhaps forcing him to his further impoverishment. Such a thought is actually inherited from *Iblīs* who believed in a mistaken plan concerning the preference of Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*).

This is a disappointing act of a student who pretends to know more than his teacher, and of a slave who thinks to be bigger than his master!

Among the things where the proof should be followed without considering the circumstances is knowing that knowledge (*'ilm*) is the best (*ashraf*) profession.

A group of ignoramuses see that scholars are less fortunate in terms of having worldly possession, so they criticise knowledge, stating, 'it is not worth possessing'. This is due to their ignorance about the value of knowledge. On the other hand, one who follows the proof is not bothered as to what difficult or unfriendly circumstance he has acquired. The test becomes apparent with the loss of interest.

If it was not among the proof on the truthfulness of our Prophet (ﷺ) except his disinclination from worldly pursuits and his deliberate impoverishment—after all, he did not leave behind anything and prohibited his family to inherit from him—this would suffice as a proof of the truthfulness of his pursuit for a different higher requirement.

Many a times, an ignorant person sees the scholars committing mistake, thus he criticises the knowledge and claims it to be incomplete. This is again a major mistake.

An intelligent person should fear Allāh and follow the demand of the intellect that commands obeying Allāh and acting upon the knowledge. One should understand that the test of patience is during the missed demands, thus he should follow the proof, even if it brings about undesirable hardship.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FIVE

Patient from Committing Sins has Praiseworthy Outcomes in this World and the Hereafter

I read *Surah Yūsuf* and I was amazed at Allāh's praise of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) over his patience (*sabr*), His elucidation of Yūsuf's story to the masses, and His elevation of his status because of him giving up sinful lust. I pondered over the secret, and found the essence to be one's opposition to the undesirable lust.

I said to myself, 'Amazing! Had he followed his lustful desire (*hawā*), he would be like anyone else; however, since he opposed it, he become a very prominent person now exemplified by the masses for his patience, and seen as an object of pride for his enduring of hardship.

All this happened because of patience he observed for a little while. What a major honour and pride—if you could control yourself for a while, on behalf of a beloved (Allāh) who is very close to you!"

On the other hand, there is Adam's (*'alayhi as-salām*) state in fulfilling his desire, which became a defect on his behalf for forever had there been no reparation to it,

فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ

"And He accepted his repentance!"
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 37]

Observe for a while, may Allāh have mercy on you, the outcome of patience and the end result of a sinful desire.

An intelligent person is he who can distinguish between the two matters, between both sweet ones and sour ones. As for the one who keeps his scales balanced, and does not incline towards the pan of sinful desire. He will find all the benefits of patience and all loss that comes with agreeing to one's self in accomplishing sinful desires.

This should suffice as an admonition for the intelligent in opposing their accomplishment of sinful desires!

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SIX

Regarding the Things that Help Reform the Heart (*ṣallāḥ al-qalb*)

I have seen being engrossed in studying fiqh and ḥadīth this is barely sufficient in the reformation of the heart (*ṣallāḥ al-qalb*), unless it is mixed with heart-softening (*riqā'iq*) stories and having insight (*naẓr*) into the lives of the pious (*sirah al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).

As for the knowledge of the *ḥalal* only, then it has no major impact on softening of the heart. The hearts soften by mentioning heart-melting narrations and stories of the pious because they have acquired the objective (and fruits) of the ḥadīth—having left the (outward) physicality of actions and having moved on to tasting their meanings. I am only mentioning this after *'tasting'* (*dhawq*) it and researching about it.

I found that the drive of most of the ḥadīth experts and students is in attaining ḥadīths with the shortest chains of narration and accumulating many parts of ḥadīth.

And most scholars of *fiqh* are engrossed in polemics and learning techniques that allow one to overpower his opponent.

How can the heart soften with such things?

On the contrary, a group of righteous predecessors would seek a pious worshipper of Allāh to look at his character and seek his guidance. Not to seek his knowledge (*'ilm*), because the objective of learning knowledge is to instil the sublime qualities in one self and benefit from its guidance.

Try to digest this fact. Blend your pursuit of the knowledge of fiqh and ḥadīth with studying about the lives of the pious predecessors (*salaf*) and ascetics (*zuhhād*), so it contributes to the softening of the heart (*riqqa al-qalb*).

I have compiled a book containing life account and attributes of many famous and noble people.[159] I have compiled a book containing the tales (and wisdoms) of Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, a book containing the life account of Sufyān al-Thawrī, respective books on life stories of Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Ma'rūf and others among the scholars and ascetics. May Allāh give us the ability to reach the goals.

An action without knowledge is imperfect; its example is like that of a co-pilot and captain, as the self is between them, it's hard to be controlled. With the serious attitude of both the co-pilot and the captain, the journey is undertaken easily.

We seek Allāh's protection from lassitude.

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[159] See '*Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*' of Ibn al-Jawzī

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SEVEN

Following Concessions Create Hard-Heartedness and Darkness

I conceded a matter that was permitted in some *madhahib* (singular, *madhhab*), I felt thereby extreme hard-heartedness (*qaṣwa ʿaẓamia*). I felt some kind of expulsion and banishment (*buʿd*), while the darkness (*ẓulma*) intensified.

My '*self*' spoke out, 'What is this (feeling of guilt)? Is it not the case you have not turned away from the consensus of the scholars (*ijmāʿ al-fuqahāʾ*) in this matter?' I replied, "O bad self (*nafs al-suʾ*)! Your answer is in two ways:

First, you tried to construe what you do not believe in. If you were asked a *fatwa* about it, you would not give the *fatwa* according to what you did.'

The '*self*' answered, 'If I really did not believe in its permissibility, I would not have done it!'

I contended, 'But your real belief (*iʿtiqād*) is what you choose for others in *fatwa*.'

Second, you ought to be pleased (*farḥ*) then with the darkness (*ẓulma*) that you receive in the Hereafter. That is because, if you did not have a light (*nūr*) in your heart, you would never feel the darkness.

It confirmed, 'I really felt being in wilderness because of this renewed darkness in my heart.'

So I suggested to it, 'Then make sure to give up, and consider what you are giving up for its inaction is permissible by consensus. Regard what you have given up as a matter of increasing in piety.' Then it accepted the request.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-EIGHT

Do Not Show Enmity towards Anyone for you Are Not Safe from Vicissitudes of Time

Amongst the experiences of life that have benefited me, is the fact it is not appropriate for anyone to show enmity towards anyone else as much as one can forbear. Because he will most likely have a need for him, whatever his own position may be.

A person may perceive that he may not necessitate the like of him at any time, yet how many belittled men have been needed to requisite in the past! If the need is not realised through this person in acquiring an interest, contrarily, he may be required to prevent a harm instead!

In my lifetime, I have necessitated showing kindness to a group of people about whom it never crossed that a need will occur later to show kindness to them.

Know that showing enmity (*'adāwa*) brings about harm from where one does not know. One who harbours enmity is just like one who draws the sword out from the sheath awaiting the place to strike, wherein, sometimes a hidden place to strike becomes evident from him, even if one who is wearing armour, and tries to conceal himself, ultimately allowing the enemy the opportunity to strike.

Therefore, it is important for one living in this world not to reveal enmity to anyone, for the reason I have provided; because of each necessitating the other and because the power of causing harm by some against others.

This chapter is beneficial whose benefit becomes apparent for a human with the changing of times.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-NINE

Pleasures of This World are Connected with Calamities and Darkness

I envisaged myself looking at the pleasures (*ladhāt*) of men in the world and forgetting how they were acquired them, together with the calamities (*āfāt*) that are associated with them.

The explanation of this reality is thus:

If you see a man of power (*imāra*) and authority (*sultāna*) and if you ponder over his bounties, you will find they are linked to oppression. If he has not intended to carry out oppression, then it came about from his civil servants. Above that, he remains insecure and disturbed in all his affairs, cautious about his enemy poisoning him, worried about his superiors who may dismiss him, and about his counterpart who may plot against him. Thus most of his time is spent in serving those rulers who he is fearful of, accounting their wealth, executing their orders that are not devoid of disgusted things.

If he is dismissed, its anguish extends to all the pleasures one has attained. That pleasure is then covered with caution (*hadhr*) from all sides.

If you see a businessman, you will find that he has travelled extensively around the country. He did not acquire what he possesses except only after attaining an old age and after surpassing the age of pleasure.

It is narrated about a noble person for example, who during his youth was poor and then became rich after attaining old age. He owned wealth, bought Turkish slaves and young slave women from Rome. He said the following poem to explain his state:

I never hoped to own it when I was twenty years old,
But ended up owning it after becoming seventy years old,
The gazelles among the Turks roam around me,
As if, they are branches found on top of the dunes of Yabrin.
And the virgin girls of Rome are stunning due to their beauty, they resemble the wide-eyed damsels of Paradise,
They pinch me with their soft fingers, whose tips can be used to knot fine clothing.
They want to bring back to life a selfless soul who has no movement,
Then, how will they be able to enliven a dead person who is already buried,
They (friends) complained, 'your groan keeps us awake at night,
So what is the complaint', I replied eighty years of age.

This is a common and widespread state people are found in. A person is incapable of accumulating everything he loves, but does so near the time of his departure from the world. If he hastens to acquire what he loves in his prime of youth, his immaturity prevents him from understanding the strategy or the method of attaining good pleasure. A man in his childhood fails to understand where he is, unless he reaches maturity. When he reaches maturity, his energy is spent in finding a bride by any cost necessary. When he marries, he has children who prevent him from acquiring further pleasure. He breaks down. He needs to earn for their upkeep. While he has gained experience during that age closer to thirties, his hair begins to whiten and he disowns himself knowing that women will estrange him, as Ibn al-Mu'tazzbillāh states,

I have tired myself in my old age,
how can young effeminate ladies love me?

Thus, one who seeks pleasure with beautiful women and finds them while he does not have wealth, he is unable to reach the goal. If he indulges in accumulating wealth, the time to seek pleasure is lost. If the mission is accomplished, then *'greying'* (of his hair) seems the most ugliest thing to happen.

Then, the wealthy person becomes fearful about wealth, assesses those who he deals with, is criticised if he is a spendthrift and stingy. His children await his death, his female servant is not happy with his personality, is busy in protecting his close ones, his time is spent in woes and the pleasures are regular sneaks that contain no real pleasure.

Ultimately, on the Day of Judgment, the noble and businessman will be humiliated apart from those whom Allāh will protect.

Astutely beware from looking at the outward structure of their bounties, as you might like it from a distance from you, however, if acquired, you may dislike it. It is coupled with the woes of the world and the Hereafter that cannot be described. Therefore adopt self-satisfaction as much as you can, for it contains the safety of this world and the Hereafter.

An ascetic who had a piece of dry bread with him was asked, 'How do you like this?' He replied, 'I leave it, until I like it.'

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY

Soliloquizing

A type of hatred occurred between me and leaders of some provinces regarding the adoption of a madhab in creed. In a gathering of reminders, I was mentioning that the Qur'ān is the Speech of Allāh and is of time immemorial. I was also giving preference to Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*).

I was also agreeing with the provincial governors. Some of them were leaning towards the Ashʿarite school in creed. Among them were those who inclined towards the Rawāfiḍh (*Shiʿah*) school. Inside of themselves, they were filling with hatred against me.

I soliloquized while talking to the Almighty, 'My Master, all my affairs are entrusted to you, there is no one who can harm me apart from one whom you allow to do so. You have stated,

> وَمَا هُم بِضَآرِّينَ بِهِۦ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ
>
> "But they do not harm anyone through it except by the permission of Allāh".
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):102]

You have also made the heart of an afflicted person satisfied with Your statement,

قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَآ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَىٰنَاۚ

> "Say, 'Never will we be struck except by what Allāh has decreed for us; He is our protector.'"
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (10): 51]

'If you allow to conduct an act through the hands of someone among them that will result in my humiliation. Then my fear for the act you helped him against me will be greater then my fear upon myself. As this does not lead to gossip of, 'that if he was truly on the truth, he would not have been humiliated.'

'I looked at my shortcomings and sins that demonstrate I ought to be humiliated. However, I live with helping the Sunnah, thus make me enter into its protection.

A good number of Your pious worshippers have entrusted me to Your protection. If you do not protect me because of myself, then protect me because of them.

'My Master, help me against those who have harboured enmity against me. They have not recognised You as You are ought to be recognised. They always turn away from You, so even with my shortcomings I am more rightful of your protection.'

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-ONE

Fortunate is He who humbles Himself and Asks for His Well-bring (*'āfiya*) from Allāh

It is narrated that Ḥallāj, the Ṣūfī, used to sit in the sun in severe heat, sweating. An intelligent person passed by him and said, 'Foolish! This is an attempt to challenge Allāh.'

What a beautiful statement he made! This is because that person has not placed *Shar'ī* responsibility except on those things that are against human interests and sometimes the doer is put into such hardship that he cannot bear to remain patient (*sabr*). The foolish ignorant (*al-jāhil al-aḥmaq*) who tries to challenge or asks for affliction, his actions are just like what another fool said, 'in whatever you want to test me, test me.'

The fortunate is he who humbly asks from Allāh to grant him well-being (*'āfiya*). The person may not be given a complete well-being since tests are meant to occur; yet an intelligent person continues to ask for wholesome well-being.

Thus that well-being overpowers most of his state, allowing him to exercise patience on small amounts of tests received. It is generally important for a person to realise that there is clear and simple way towards his desired ambitions. For every sip of water, there is a catch in the throat and for every morsel a particle is stuck in the throat.

How many have loved the worldly life in the past, but there is no way leading to reunion.

In reality, patience is not borne except on fate, and thus the fate barely runs in parallel to the intentions of the self.

An intelligent person (*'āqil*) persuades his self to be patient by taking into account the promise of reward and facilitation of the matter. When the time of affliction goes by without complaint, he then supplicates to Allāh begging for well-being.

As for one who is stubborn (*mutajjilid*), he has never recognised Allāh. We seek His protection from being ignorant about Him, and ask from Him to grant us His recognition.

Verily, He is Most Honourable and the Answerer of prayers.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-TWO

Deviation of Ṣūfīs and their Innovations

The safe path (*al-jāda al-salīma*) and the straight road (*al-ṭarīq al-qawīma*) is to follow (*iqtidā’*) the Law Maker, and to hasten to adopt his ways, as he is perfect with no shortcomings.

A good number of people deviated towards asceticism (*zuhd*) by overburdening themselves. They only regained their senses near the end of their lives, at a time when the body has exhausted and many important matters missed out such as seeking knowledge and so on.

On the other hand, a group of people deviated by turning towards acquiring outward knowledge (*‘ilm*) and overdoing so. They came back to their senses near the end of the life span, and by then missed the opportunity to practice it.

The way of the chosen Prophet (ﷺ) is to possess knowledge, act upon it and take care of one’s body as he advised ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhumā*) about it, stating, ‘Verily, your self has a right over you, and your wife has a right over you.’ This is the moderate path (*al-ṭarīq al-wasṭā*) and the final say on the issue.

As for the dry ground abstract (i.e. the ignorant), how many opportunities of acquiring knowledge he missed. Had he acquired it, he would attain more rewards than what he attained by doing many other actions.

The example of a scholar is that of a person who knows the way, and of a [layman] worshipper is that of one who does not know the way. On one hand, the ignorant worshipper *(al-ʿābid al-jāhil)* walks on a path from dawn *(fajr)* till late afternoon (*ʿaṣr*), whereas the scholar stands up to walk a little before the late afternoon, and lo meeting up! The scholar overtook him from afar.

If someone asks me, 'Could you explain this to me?'

I would respond: 'The (outward) physicality of worshipping is in fact, servitude (*ʿubudiyya*) and showing of humility to Allāh. Many a time, the worshipper is unable to grasp the meaning of that manifestation because sometimes, he thinks he is able to manifest a miracle, or his hand ought to be kissed thereby, or even still that he is better than many people. This is all because of little knowledge (*qilla al-ʿilm*); and what I mean by knowledge here is the understanding (*fahm*) of the principles and foundations of knowledge (*uṣūl al-ʿilm*), and not possession of sizeable number of narrations in one's memory or reading about the issues differed between the scholars.

When the principled scholar (*al-ʿālim al-uṣūlī*) peruses the knowledge, he overtakes this worshipper (*ʿābid*) because of his sublime character (*ḥasan al-khuluq*), politeness towards the people (*madārāt al-nās*), his humbleness (*tawāḍʿ*) in his self and his orientation of people towards Allāh. This attitude is hard for a worshipper to acquire, as he is asleep during the night of his ignorance about the circumstances.

Many a times, the worshipper marries a woman and then resorts himself to de-vitalization. He stops his wife from acquiring her wishes, and neither does he divorce her. Thereby becoming like the "lady who restrained her cat, neither did she feed it, nor did she release it to find insects."[160]

In contrast, if any one ponders over the circumstance of the Messenger (ﷺ), will find him most perfect among the creation, giving each rightful person his due:

Sometimes he is humorous, other times he smiles, plays with the children, listens to poetry, uses allusions, socially interacts with his spouses and female members of the family, eats what he can and what is available for him, even if it is tasty such as honey, sweet water is fetched for him, a spread is placed for him under a shade, yet he did not deny these acts, neither has it been heard of him doing what was innovated after him by the Ṣūfīs and ascetics such as stopping the self from exercising its desire absolutely and comprehensively. He would eat cucumber with dates, and would kiss his family and children and would ask for luxuries where necessary.

As for eating barley bread, and weighing the food, dieting, giving up all appetising foods, this is a form of punishment of the self and detrimental to the body, neither reason demands these actions, nor does the religion praise them!

Those who were satisfied with the little were like that for some reasons. For example, if a doubt arose, they would decrease the number of food items, or in case of a food item being mixed with an illegal type of food, they would give it up due to piety.

After all, the Prophet (ﷺ) would fulfil the right of worship with night prayers (*qiyām al-layl*) and would perform *dhikr* as much as he could.

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[160] Bukhārī, #745—on the authority of Abū Bakr (*raḍiy Allāhu ‘anhu*)

So adopt his way as it is the most complete way, and his methodology is without any corruption. Give up the statements of so and so among the ascetics, interpret their acts in a good manner and try to establish excuses for them as much as you can. If you cannot find excuses for them, then they are refuted by the Prophet's (ﷺ) own actions as he is an example for the humanity and a shining leader of the intelligent people. Have the people not become corrupt except due to their deviation from the Sacred Law?

Major calamities have occurred due to the Ṣūfīs and ascetics having thereby breached the *Sharī'ah* and crossed its limits:

- Among them are those who claim to love and to have a want, yet they do not acknowledge the beloved. Therefore, you will see them shout, call for assistance, rip off their clothes as one coming out of the limits of the Sacred Law by his own claim and its substance!
- Among them are those who overburden themselves with hunger and continuous fasting, whereas it is authentically narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) when he told 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr: "Fast one day and remain without fast the other". He asked: 'I would like something better than that.' He (ﷺ) replied, "There is nothing better than that."[161]
- Among them are those who have left (their homes and regions) to take up wandering travel and tourism. Thereby missing out on the social and collective life.
- Among them are those who have buried the books of knowledge and resorted to praying and fasting. Ignorantly dismissing the fact that burying them is a big mistake, because the self becomes unmindful and needs to be reminded at all times. And what good reminders are the books!

Iblīs entered every type of people among them from where he could find his entrance. His objective by commanding the burial of books was to extinguish the lantern of knowledge, so that the worshipper may walk in darkness (*ẓulma*).

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[161] Bukhārī, #1976 and Muslim, #1159

How beautifully did a scholar respond to a person who asked: 'I would like to go to Jabal al-Akām to live there (Lit. the mountain of hills)'. The scholar replied, 'That is *'Hawkalah'*, a slang word meaning the love for idleness and unemployment.

In reality, the ascetics are in caves and have buried themselves from benefitting the masses. This is a good state to be in only if it does not prevent a person from good works, social life, attending communal events like burials, visiting the sick and so on.

It is however, also the state of the cowards. For those who are brave, they learn and teach. This is station of the Prophets (*'alayhi as-salām*).

Can you sense the difference between the jurist and the worshipper when an incident befalls?

By Allāh, if the humanity inclined towards religious observance only then the Sacred Law would go to waste.

Alas, if he had understood the meaning of religious observance, he would not restrict it to praying and fasting only! There are many who walk towards fulfilling the need of a Muslim. This type of religious observance is better than the performing a year's fast.

Physical action entails allowing the function of the outward tools (*ālāt al-ẓāira*), whereas, knowledge (*'ilm*) allows to operate the inner tools (*ālāt al-baṭina*) such as intelligence (*'aql*), thinking (*fikr*) and understanding (*fahm*). For this reason, it is the noblest.

If you challenge the notion, 'why do you criticise those who have removed themselves from evil and negate from them the acts of religious observance?'

I reply that I do not criticise them, such incidents do however, occur due to ignorance (*jahl*). So calamities readily materialise upon those who possess little knowledge (*qilla al-ʿilm*). They also overburdened themselves with what was not prescribed for them nor was it permitted by the Legislator.

This ignorance has reached a peak where a person happens to harm his self, envisages this act to be an absolute virtue (*faḍīla*). To the extent where a fool said, 'I entered the public bath, I found therein an unmindful state (*ghafla*), so I resorted to making glorification of Allāh (*tasbīh*) in this and that way, for long time until I ended up ill. This person is putting himself at risk by doing what he ought not to do.

Other Ṣūfis and ascetics have become self-satisfied with outward clothing (*libās*), while they have mounted inwardly ignorance (*jahl fi'l-bāṭin*) that is not enough to mention in a book!

May Allāh purify the earth from them and help the scholars against them.

Most of fools are from them. If a scholar refutes one of them, the masses turn against the scholar with the force of ignorance (*quwa al-jahl*).

I have seen many worshippers (*mutaʿabbidūn*) who are just like old ladies, glorifying with praises with wordings not allowed to utter, and doing such acts in the prayers that have no mention in the Sunnah!

I once entered upon someone who was praying. He appointed an Imām to lead the voluntary post-sunrise prayers (*Ṣalah al-Ḍuhā*), who was reciting loudly, while he himself stood behind him. I told them, verily the Prophet (ﷺ) has stated, "The daylight prayers are (to be) silent."' The ascetic got really annoyed and said, 'how many times will this man criticise us? So and so entered and did the same, as did another person. The reason we raise the voice is so that we do not fall asleep.'

I replied, 'That is impressive! Who has told you not to sleep? Is there not a ḥadīth in both Ṣaḥīḥ books, narrated by Ibn ʿAmr (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*), in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Stand up for prayers and also sleep."[162] The Prophet (ﷺ) used to sleep and mostly likely, no night has ever passed but he has slept in it.

I saw a man, by the name of Ḥusayn al-Qazwinī at the Grand Masjid of al-Manṣūr district, walking frequently and continuously; so I asked, 'what is the reason for this walking?' Someone replied, 'He does that so he does not fall asleep.'

These are all foolish acts demanded by little knowledge. If the self does not get a portion of sleep, then the mind becomes disillusioned, and the meaning of religious observance is lost due to the gaping distance of comprehension.

Some pious person residing in the vicinity of the Grand Masjid of al-Manṣūr related to me that a man called Kathīr once entered the *masjid* and said, 'I made a promise to Allāh, then I broke it, so I have imposed a punishment on myself that I will not eat for forty days.' He remained in that state for ten days, praying in congregation. However, in the second period of ten days, his weakness became apparent while he was coaxing the matter. In the third round of ten days, he started performing his prayers in a sitting position and then in the fourth period, he started falling down. When he accomplished the forty days, a fruit juice was brought to him, he drank it. We heard the noise in his throat a noise like that of the water falling into a wok. Then, he died a few days later.

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[162] Reference already mentioned

I said to myself: 'O Allāh! How strange! Look at what ignorance did with its possessors. The apparent judgment of this man is that he is in the Fire, unless he is shown mercy and forgiven. If he understood knowledge and asked the scholars, they would have informed him that it is obligatory to eat. What he did with himself is prohibited. Yet the biggest ignorance (*a'ẓam al-'ilm*) is a man's tyranny against his knowledge.

All these incidents grew slowly until they became established. As for the first generation of Muslims, they did not have any of this nonsense. The Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*) never did any of these things. They would be extremely generous, yet also eat moderately. They only forbore when they did have nothing to eat. If anyone wants to follow, then he should follow the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and the Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*). In it, there is remedy and desired goal.

An intelligent person should not always blindly follow a giant (personality) who has become famous, by stating that Abū Zayd said this, Al-Thawrī stated this and so on and so forth. That is because the follower of such statements is blind. How many a times we have seen a blind who disdains from carrying a stick.

The one who understands what was pointed out above, will surely seek better and higher values.

May Allāh give the ability to act upon them.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-THREE

Philosophy and Monasticism are from the main Innovations that Appeared in Islām

I pondered over the corruption that entered our religion from both, the angle of knowledge (*'ilm*) and action (*'amal*). I saw both the ways entering the religion and people becoming familiar with them:

The main corruptive element in knowledge and creed (*i'tiqād*) came from philosophy (*falsafa*).

The reason was because a good number of scholars in our religion did not satisfy themselves with what the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was already content with by resorting to the Book and Sunnah. They studied philosophical schools (*madhhab ahlu'l-falsafa*) of thought in great depth. They entered into theological debates using philosophical rhetoric (*al-Kalām*), which lead them, to lowly schools of thought that corrupted the creed (*'aqā'id*).

As for the main corrupting element in the context of action, it came from monasticism (*rahbāniyya*).

A good number of ascetics (*mutazahidīn*) learned from the monks (*rahabān*) the way to abstinence (*ṭarīq al-taqqashaf*), simultaneously failing to look at the life accounts of our Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*). They heard the criticism about the worldly life (*dhamm al-dunyā*) and failed to understand the objective of it. They combined disinclination (*iʿrād*) from the knowledge of our *Sharīʿah* with misunderstanding the objectives, thus did evil innovations (*bidaʿ qabīha*) materialise.

The first who instigated this was *Iblīs* by commanding them to turn away from the Sacred Knowledge. They buried their books and washed them away. He ordered them to take up places of worship as per his intention. He revealed to them amusing stories making the masses incline to them. He thus made their whim and desires their god. Had they realised that from the time they had buried the books and departed from the Sacred Knowledge, the light of knowledge had extinguished, they would not have done that; Satan however is a skilled deceiver the day he ordered them to bury their knowledge under the earth.

In fact, it is through the Sacred Knowledge the corruption (*fisād*) of the both ways is exposed, and one is guided to the correct path.

We ask Allāh that He does not prevent us from being near Him, as He is the light in darkness, He is the companion in loneliness and the helper during trials.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FOUR

In the Company of Idle People (*ahlul-firāq*)

I seek Allāh's refuge from the company of the idle people (*suhba al-biṭālīn*).

I have seen a sizeable number of people, dragging me on abundant visits people have become accustomed to. They call this visit a service (*khidma*), in which they request to sit and where they gossip about the people. They indulge the things that do not concern them. What happens within it is pure backbiting (*ghībah*).

This is something that many people are doing in our era. Perhaps this is what the person being visited has requested and inclined towards due to bewilderment by his own loneliness. This specially happens on the days of celebrations and festivities.

You see some of them going to meet others, were they do not restrict themselves to congratulations and salutations only. But rather they mix with them those things that I mentioned earlier amounting to wasting valuable time.

Since observing that time is a noble entity where one should remain alert in performing good things, I dislike wasting any of it. I remained stuck with them between two issues:

(i) If I criticise them, this will bring about bewilderment by cutting off a familiar behaviour.
(ii) If I accepted their request to pay visits then that would lead to the wastage of time. I started to repel the meetings with all effort, and if I was overpowered, I would then shorten the conversation to hasten departure.

I began to prepare some tasks that prevent me from conversing during the meetings with them. I kept the following tasks ready during their meeting: cutting paper (for writing), sharpening the pens and binding the notebooks. These things are important tasks and they do not require the faculty of thinking or concentration. I kept them ready for the hours of their visits, so none of my time goes to waste.

We ask Allāh, the Almighty and Majestic, that He grants us the realisation of the value of time in this life, and grants us the ability to take advantage from it.

I have seen a good number of people who do not know the meaning of life.

Among them are those whom Allāh has enriched from their earning due to the abundance in wealth, so he sits in the marketplace most of the day looking at people. How much calamity and evil goes past him!

Among them are those who free themselves to play chess. Among them are also those who spend time engrossed in news from the rulers, high cost of living and bargains and so on.

I thus recognised, that Allāh the Almighty did not reveal the virtue of lifetime and the value of the time of well-being to anyone apart from for those whom He has granted the ability of realisation and inspired them with its worth.

وَمَا يُلَقَّىٰهَآ إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

> "And none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good]."
>
> [*al-Fuṣṣilāt* (41):35]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FIVE

Organising the Time of the People of Knowledge and Valuing it

I observed with a right opinion that benefit from compilations of books is more virtuous than teaching in front of the students.

That is because I am only able to encounter a certain number of students in my lifetime. Whereas with compiled works, I can encounter a huge number of people who have not yet been born.

The evidence is that people benefit (continually) from the compilations of the scholars who have passed away, more than what they benefit from their living scholars and teachers.

It is thus important for a scholar to compile as many books as he can, if he has been granted the ability to write beneficial works. Because not all of those who have compiled books have really compiled useful works, neither the objective is to compile a work in whatever manner for the sake of it.

In reality, they are the secrets (*asrār*) that Allāh reveals upon whom He wishes among His servants and gives the ability to reveal them.

Therefore, he is able to compile that which is dispersed, provide order to what is disorganised, and elucidate what is ambiguous and so on. That is what is meant by a useful compilation (*al-tasnīf al-mufīd*).

It is important to take advantage of writing works in the period of midlife since the beginning part of one's life is all about seeking the knowledge (*ʿilm*) and the latter part is when the human faculties are weak.

Many a time, intellect (*ʿaql*) and understanding (*fahm*) beguile one who tries to calculate his life because no one knows the unseen. So the period of seeking knowledge (*ẓamān al-ṭalab*), memorising (*ḥifẓ*) and pretention to be busy (*tashāghul*) is up to forty years of age. Thereafter, one starts teaching (*taʿlīm*) and compiling works (*taṣānīf*).

That is only if one has reached the necessary requirement in terms of accumulating the knowledge base, memorising it, and has been divinely assisted in reaching the milestones.

On the other hand, if one has less such tools like books, or is young in age or was weak in acquiring knowledge failing to attain its requirements during that period, his compilations will have to be delayed until he reaches fifty years of age.

He will compile and teach until he reaches sixty years of age. After hitting the age of sixty, he increases in teaching, delivering the knowledge of ḥadīth and other sciences. Sometimes pauses to compile works, unless there is the need until he attains the age of seventy.

Upon crossing the age of seventy, mentioning the Hereafter and preparation for departure become the most important issues for him, thus he starts offering more to himself; apart from some teaching with the intention of attaining reward thereby or compiling some works which he is in need of. This is the best preparation for the Hereafter.

His effort should be directed to purify himself, rectifying his character, in all attempts at repairing his faults. If he is taken away from this world during the period of what we mentioned, then the main thing to remember is that a believer's intention is better than his action. If he attains all these phases, then we have already mentioned what is ought to be done in each stage of them.

Sufyān al-Thawrī has mentioned, 'One who reaches the age of the Prophet (ﷺ), then he should prepare a shroud for himself.'

A group of scholars attained the age of seventy seven such as Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. If he reaches that age, let him note that he is at the edge of the grave and that every day granted to him is a bonus.

If he reaches the age of eighty, he should spend all his effort in purifying his character and preparing his provision [for the Hereafter], thus begging for forgiveness (*istighfār*) is his ally and the remembrance of Allāh is his companion. He should also become delicate in assessing his self (*muḥāsaba al-nafs*), delivering his knowledge and socialising with people, because 'the proximity of review of the army must compel one to be cautious of any impediment.'

He should try his best in preserving his legacy before his departure, such as publicising his knowledge, distributing his works and spending some of his wealth.

After all this advice, whoever Allāh befriends, He teaches him the wisdom and whoever Allāh wants, He inspires him.

We beg from Him that he befriends us and does not turn away from us. He is surely close to us and answers our prayers.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY

Obedience among Many is a Custom rather than an act of Worship

I have seen the customs (*'ādāt*) of people have overtaken the Religion in their actions. They are bewildered in doing an act because it is not part of the customs, and not because of the Law (Religion)!

How many times you find a person who is described as good (*khayr*), yet when he acquires some broken pieces of gold, he sells it in return for a sound piece of gold and does not do *taqlīd* (following a scholar in that matter); neither acting upon the permitted act. All this is done because of adherence to the customs of the people and finding it difficult to ask for a *fatwa* about it!

You will find abundant number of people who adhere to performing a prayer called the prayer of *al-Raghā'ib*,[163] yet they slack the observance of the obligatory (*farā'id*) prayers.

Many Ṣūfīs do not feel bewildered by committing injustice (*ẓulm*) against the people, then they try to be charitable (*ṣadaqah*) to the poor (*fuqāra'*), while simultaneously being lax in giving the obligatory charity (*zakat*), slacking in actions by employing therein far-fetched interpretations.

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[163] An innovated prayer of 12 units that is performed on the first Thursday of the month of Rajab between al-Maghrīb and al-'Ishā prayers.

After this, if any of them is present in a sermon, he weeps as if he is pretending due to the demand of the situation. Amongst them are those who take out some obligatory charity as a cover-up for the wealth they have not donated. Among them are those who know that their main wealth is prohibited (*ḥaram*), yet they cannot bear its departure because of custom (*'āda*).

Among them are those who divorce (*talāq*) their wives, and then retract it as they find the separation hard (*ṣa'b*).

Sometimes they try to interpret or they slacken in the interpretation (*tawīl*), relying on the forgiveness of Allāh and promising oneself about repenting (*tawbah*).

Among them are those who see the use of the Law (Religion) as a cause of tightening their livelihoods (*ma'āsh*), as they have become habituated with concessions, thus finding it hard to depart from leeway. Overall, customs are destructive (*mahlaqa*).

An octogenarian man came in my presence. I struck a deal with him and bought a shop from him. We departed and after a few days he deceived me. I requested him to attend court for judgement. He refused, so I brought him to the judge. He took a false oath stating, 'I have not sold the shop'. I cursed him, saying, 'may a year not pass for him'. He started to bribe those unjust men who were between me and him.

In this instance, I saw among the laymen those who have been overpowered by customs, who do not pay attention to the statement of a jurist, instead saying, 'this man has not yet received the payment, then how can the transaction be valid?!' The other stating, 'is it permissible for you to take over his shop without his satisfaction?' while the third exclaimed, 'it is imperative for you to cancel the transaction?' When I did not cancel the transaction, he and his family began to dishonour me. He thought he was protecting his kingdom, so he sought me to the Sultān (ruler), where he inflamed lies that shocked me and where he gave bribes to a number of unjust people.

By exaggeration they tried their best to put me in trouble, but Allāh saved me from their evil plot. I furnished the evidence before the judge; some worldly person spoke out, 'do not pass judgment in his favour.' He retracted from passing the judgment even after the establishment of proof before him. I saw from this judge and from another judge, worse instances of giving up the execution of Truth (justice), all to protect their positions that made me look down on the actions of that old man, in the protection of his wealth, because of his ignorance and because of the knowledge of these men.

It became clear to me that the customs have overpowered the people and the Law (Religion) has been neglected. If the custom happens to be confirming the Law (Religion), then it is because of it being subsequently conforming or it's because of the custom. If a person received lashes for not fasting in Ramaḍān, that is because it is a custom that has remained a status quo.

On the other hand, if he dishonours someone or misappropriates his wealth, then that is seemingly acceptable being a prevailing custom! How many times have I seen this old man praying and looking after his prayers, but when he felt his interests were at stake, he left the religion (*dīn*) aside!

How many times I have seen those judges adhering to the religious observances and seeking knowledge, yet when they feared the loss of their positions, they forsook a part of religion!

Then Allāh helped me against the old man. The judge came to me to execute what was established before him. A year passed, the old man died in destituteness.

We ask Allāh, the Almighty to grant us the ability to submit to his Law (Religion) and oppose our whims and desires.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-SEVEN

A Scholars Independence from People and limited Intermingling with them is from his Pleasure

I have never known a pleasure (*ladha*), honour (*'izza*), nobility (*sharf*), nor comfort (*rāha*) or safety (*salāma*) better (*afadl*) than solitude (*'uzla*) and being aloof (from people). Because of it, one is able to attain safety and well-being of his body, religion, rank before Allāh and the people.

Reason being those who intermingle (*makhāt*) with people, are looked down upon since people do not magnify the position of those who mix with them. It's because of this perception, the value of the Caliphs was ennobled for they remained concealed in most part. When the lay people see a scholar acting upon the convenient in a permissible matter, he is regarded with contempt by them.

It is therefore compulsory to protect one's knowledge (*'ilm*) and establish the value of that knowledge before them.

A pious predecessor stated, 'We used to joke and laugh, but when we became leaders, I do not see such an act can accommodate us any longer.’

Sufyān al-Thawrī said, ‘Learn this sacred knowledge (*ʿilm*), keep it under control, do not mix it with jokes, otherwise the hearts will relieve it.’

Taking people into consideration should not be negated. The Messenger (ﷺ) told ‘Ā’ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*), “If your people were not new [in Islām] and closer to disbelief (*kufr*), I would demolish the Kaʿbah and rebuilt it (as it originally was) by placing two doors for it.”[164]

Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal stated about the two units of prayer before Maghrib prayer: ‘I saw people disliking them, so I gave them up.’

Do not listen to an ignorant man who sees this behaviour as a ‘*show off*’ (*riyāʾ*). This is only for the protection (*ṣiyāna*) of the [sacred] knowledge (*ʿilm*).

The clarification (*bayān*) of this attitude can be understood from the fact that if a scholar came out bare-headed, or with a piece of bread he was eating, then he becomes degraded in their sight. Though such things are permissible, it becomes like mixing the doctor’s prescription with the diet.

A scholar should not become too relaxed with the people as this is to protect (*ḥifẓ*) them (and their honour). When he needs to do anything permissible, he should do so away from their eyesight.

This is the integrity Abū ‘Ubaydah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) took into consideration when he saw ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) arriving at the Levant (*al-Shām*), riding on a donkey, while both his legs were put to one side. He said, 'O leader of the believers! There will be senior officials who will be meeting you.' How beautiful was that which he noticed! However, 'Umar intended to educate Abū 'Ubaydah the preservation of a principle. He stated, 'Allāh honoured you through Islām, whenever you sought honour somewhere else, he degraded you.'

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[164] Bukhārī, #1583 and Muslim, #1333

Meaning, your seeking of honour should be through the religion and not through the physicality and outward appearances of actions. Since the appearances are noticed; though a person could be naked at home alone, yet when he appears in public, he should dress up appropriately with a suit, turban and a robe.

Such an act should not be taken as pretention nor should it be attributed to boasting about oneself.

Imām Mālik would take a shower, use perfume and sit down to deliver lecture on ḥadīth.

Do not pay attention to what you see, such as the scholars spending their time at the gates of rulers. For being aloof and in solitude are more protective for the scholar and the [sacred] knowledge. The loss scholars earn is many times more than the profit they make.

The leader of the jurists, Sa'īd Ibn al-Musayyib would not visit the rulers, thus they remained pacified about him. This is an act of an assertive person.

If you want pleasure (*ladha*) and comfort (*rāḥa*), then do so right inside your house, away from your family members in this way your living will be pleasurable. Apportion a time to meet your family members so that when they come to know about the time period of meeting, they will display mannerism when meeting you. Social living is managed in a much better way like this.

There should be a part in the house where you can confide in yourself alone, where you can talk and read the lines of your books, racing on the tracks of your thoughts. Avoid meeting people, especially the lay people. Try to earn a living which it will protect you from being greedy (and needy of others). This is the ultimate pleasure for a scholar in this world.

Ibn al-Mubārak was asked, 'What is the matter that you do not sit with us?' He replied, 'Rather I go to sit with the Companions and the Tābi'un', indicating that he likes to spend time with his books.'

When a scholar is bestowed with independence (*ghinā*) and solitude (*khalwa*)—if he has understanding—he compiles books, making his pleasure integrate.

If he is granted understanding, where he ascends to interact with the Creator and to entreat solemnly to Him, then he has hastily entered the Paradise before his death.

We ask from Allāh to grant us an active zeal (*himma 'āliya*) that ascends to perfection (*kamāl*) and an ability to do good deeds (*ṣāliḥ al-a'māl*).

Ultimately, those walking on the path of truth (*ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*) are indeed few.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-EIGHT

Some Life Accounts of Ibn al-Jawzī

I pondered over the circumstances of notable people and found most of them apparently lost.

Among them are those who exceeded in committing sins (*maʿāṣī*) in their youth (*shabāb*), while others have slacked acquiring knowledge (*ʿilm*), while some increased benefitting from their pleasures (*ladhāt*).

In their old age, all of them were full of regret for being unable to recoup for the sins (*dhunūb*) done in the past, for the strength that have now weakened or for a virtue that has been lost. The old age is therefore spent in sorrow (*ḥasrāt*).

If the old man has any sense of his sins committed in the past, he cries out, 'How regretful am I for the sins that I committed!' If he is not conscious about their seriousness, he instead regrets about the pleasures he missed.

As for the one who spent the period of his youth in seeking the [sacred] knowledge, then in his old age he celebrates the fruits of the trees he planted, and gains pleasure from publishing what he compiled. He does not see any loss in the pleasures of the body that he missed out, compared to what he gained from the pleasures of knowledge.

This includes his pleasures in seeking knowledge through which he thought to attain the goal. Perhaps those acts were more pleasant than what he attained thereby, just as poet stated:

> I shake with joy when wishing her arrival
> As many wishes are sweeter than victory

I pondered over myself in comparison to my family members who spent their lives in earning the worldly pleasures, while I spent my childhood and youth in seeking knowledge. I found myself that I never felt having missed out on what they gained, apart from the fact that had I attained that, I would regret over it.

I then contemplated my situation and found out that my life is better than theirs and my notability among the people is higher than theirs. As for what I gained in terms of knowledge, that is indeed priceless.

Iblīs (Satan) said to me, 'But you have forgotten to take account of your tiredness and sleeplessness.'

I replied to him, 'Oh ignoramus (*jāhil*)! Cutting off the hands has no impact when one is looking at Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*). How a lengthy path driven one to a friend!

> May Allāh reward the path to Him with goodness.
> Even if it leaves the camels like an empty food container.

During the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of my pursuit for knowledge, I underwent hardships that are sweeter for me than honey because of what I sought and hoped for.

During my childhood, I would take with me dried pieces of bread, I would depart to acquire the knowledge of ḥadīth, and would sit down on the banks of River ʿĪsā. I was unable to eat apart from being closer to the water.

Each time I ate a morsel, I would drink water over it. The eye of my ambition (*himma*) would not see anything except for the pleasure (*ladha*) of seeking knowledge.

The fruits of that pursuit ripened for me because I became known for having heard considerably about the life accounts of the Prophet (ﷺ), his etiquettes, the life accounts of his companions and their followers. I became like Ibn Ajwad in knowing the way of the Prophet (ﷺ).

The fruits of my conduct had borne fruits that cannot be sensed by knowledge. Even during my childhood, during the time of maturity and bachelorhood, I can remember my ability to do things which the *'self'* (*nafs*) craved for (of sin), just like the pining of a thirsty person for clean and pure water. The only thing that prevented me from doing so was the fear (*khawf*) of Allāh that was harvested in me.

If it were not for the errors, that no human is free from, I feared on myself from haughtiness (*ʿujb*).

However, Allāh, the Most High, protected me and taught me. He informed me of the secrets of knowledge (*asrār al-ʿilm*) in recognising Him, and preferring seclusion (*khalwa*) with Him; to the extent that if Maʿrūf [al-Karkhī] and Bishr [al-Ḥāfī] were present in my company, I would feel congested.

He then returned and immersed me in delinquency (*taqṣīr*) and negligence (*tafrīt*), to the extent I felt myself to be most unfortunate and bad.

Sometimes, He would wake me up for nightly voluntary prayers (*qiyām al-layl*) and silent entreat with Him. Sometimes He would prevent me from doing this, despite the good health of the body.

If there were no glad-tidings of the [sacred] knowledge, which is part of education (*tadhīb*) and perfection (*ta'dīb*), I would be driven either to become haughty (*'ujb*) while performing good deeds or assuming hopelessness during inaction.

However, my hope in His Grace (*faḍl*) moderated my fear of Him.

Hope (*rajā'*) can sometimes become overpowering due to the strength of its causes (*quwwa asbāb*). That is because I saw that the Almighty cared for me since my childhood. My father passed away before I attained consciousness, while my mother would not pay attention to me. He placed the love for knowledge (*ḥubb al-'ilm*) in my disposition and He kept placing me into the most important priorities in the order of merit, taking me to those who would lead me to the most correct ways, until He perfected my affairs.

How many times my enemies tried to harm me, yet He stopped them from approaching me. When I see that He has helped me, granted me with insight, defended me and bestowed me with abundant favours, then my hope in the future strengthens because of the things I saw in the past.

More than two hundred thousand people repented on my hands in the sermons and two hundred people have embraced Islām on my hands.

How many times the eyes of the arrogant flowed with tears due to the effect of my sermons, which had never flowed before. It is appropriate for the one who has observed this favour that he hopes for the perfection. Sometimes the causes of fear (*asbāb al-khawf*) appeared through my vision which contributed to my negligence and blunders.

I sat down one day and saw around me more than ten thousand people. There was no one among them but his heart had softened or his eyes had shed tears.

I told to myself: 'What will happen to you, if they are saved and you are destroyed?' I shouted with the tongue of my affection, 'My Lord and My Master! If you decide to punish me tomorrow, do not let them know about my punishment, as a protection of Your honour and not because of me, so that it is not uttered, 'He [Allāh] punished the one who guided (others) to Him.'

My Lord! It was said to your Prophet (ﷺ), 'Kill Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite'. He responded: "[No] for the people will then say that Muḥammad kills his companions."[165]

Oh My Lord! Preserve their good perceptions about me through Your grace, from informing them about the punishment of the guide to You. You forbid! By Allāh! Oh My Lord! From muddying the clean state.

Do not sharpen the wooden stick that you turned into an arrow
May the founder of nobility take care from breaking it
Do not dehydrate the plantation who plants
Due to the direction of your bestowal, have turned into a rich garden

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[165] Bukhārī, #3518 and Muslim, #2584—on the authority of Jābir (*raḍiy-Allahu ʿanhu*).

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-NINE

Nomads are Eloquent

Know that Allāh has instilled certain things in the soul (*nafs*) that do not need to be proven. People know them by nature, but most people are unable to express them.

For example, Allāh instilled in people the disposition that creation must have had a creator, and that a building must have had a builder. That two is more than one, and that an object cannot be in two places at the same time. Such things do not need to be proven.

He has inspired Arabs to speak without making linguistic errors. They distinguish between *marfū'* (as being a normative case) and *manṣūb* (as being objective case) by nature, even if they fail to express the reason with words.

They used to contemplate speech and give each word its correct position. 'Uthmān Ibn Jinnī said, "A language is a compilation of sounds that people use to express themselves. And *Naḥw* (grammar rules) are used to imitate the way a certain people speak."

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY

Contemplation is the Reason for Success and Abandoning it is the Reason for Corruption

I have thought about righteous people and evil people. I found that the reason behind righteousness is contemplation, and the reason behind evil is neglecting to contemplate.

A wise person contemplates and realises that there must be a Creator who needs to be obeyed. He contemplates the miracles (*muʿjiẓāt*) of the Messenger (ﷺ) and so surrenders to the true religion. So he looks into whatever brings him closer to Allāh.

If he faces difficulty in memorising knowledge, he contemplates its fruits so it becomes easy for him to memorise it. The same is true if he faces difficulty in praying the night prayer. If he confronts something desirable, he contemplates the end result of following his desires, how the pleasurable moments go away, while shame remains. So it becomes easy for him to deflect his desires and to follow them.

And if he wants to take revenge, he remembers the reward of patience (*sabr*) and how an angry person regrets the actions he commits in the state of anger (*ghadab*). And he contemplates how short life is, so he takes advantage of life by gaining virtue, thus achieving his goals.

As for he who is oblivious, he is short-sighted.

Some of them contemplated the Creator and creation, but ended up denying Him and stopped contemplating. They also denied the Messengers and the religion they brought.

They only look at whatever is near to them without contemplating its beginning and ending. All they know about food is how to eat it; had they thought about its origin and how it preserves human bodies, they would have known the reality of things.

They never look at the outcome of lusts (*shahawāt*) they fulfil, they only think about the immediate pleasures—causing them to be punished and disgraced.

Fulfilling lusts hastily often causes one to miss out on virtue and to gain shamefulness. This is all caused by not contemplating the future outcome of things, which is what the mind and intellect demands. Contemplation is praiseworthy, while chasing lusts is condemned.

We ask Allāh to keep us astute and grant us insight in order to figure the end results, and to make us realise the reality of virtue and shame.

He is indeed able to do so.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-ONE

A Person with Determination is Caught Between his High Hopes and Short Ones

I was granted a strong determination (*himma ʿāliya*), but old age arrived impeding achieving what I had hoped for. So I prayed for a long life and a strong body to achieve what I had hoped for.

Nature blamed me for doing so and said, 'What you are asking for goes against nature', so I responded, 'I am praying to Him who defies nature'.

A man was asked, 'We need a small favour', and so he answered, 'ask for it from a small man'.

Another person was asked, "we would like to ask you for a favour that will not harm you', so he answered, 'then ask it from a lowly people'.

If proud men say such things then why would not we have hope in the bounty of the One who is generous and able? I prayed for this in Rabīʿ ul-Thanī of the year five hundred seventy five AH, if I live long enough and achieve my hopes, then I will move this chapter to a later position of the book and will mention that I have achieved what I had hoped for.

If not, then I am certain that my Master knows best what is good for me. He never abstains from answering a call out of stinginess (*bukhl*).

There is no power except through Him.[166]

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[166] The author died in 579 A.H.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-TWO

Adhere to the Truth and Do Not Adorn Yourselves for the Sake of People

Those who are sincere (*khālis*) in working for Allāh are few. People love to show-off the deeds they perform.

Sufyān al-Thawrī used to say, 'I do not count actions that I do openly.'

The early generation of Muslims used to conceal their actions, but nowadays people's clothes (i.e. outward appearance) expose them.

Ayūb al-Sakhtiyānī used to make his garments longer to the point of touching his feet, and he used to say, 'In the past, people used to seek fame by lengthening their garments, but nowadays they seek fame by shortening them.' [Shorting them is the Sunnah, but with sincerity].

Know that refraining from showing-off (*riyā'*) to people, being sincere (*ikhlāṣ al-qaṣd*) and concealing actions was the reason why the status of great Muslims was elevated.

Sometimes Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal used to walk barefooted and used to carry his sandals, and used to take from cheap wheat.

Bishr [al-Ḥāfī] used to always walk barefooted, and Maʿrūf [al-Karkhī] used to collect date seeds.

Nowadays, there is an aspect of leadership (*riyāsat*) in all things. And once the desire for leadership takes over the heart (*qalb*), then oblivion (*ghafla)*, showing-off to the creation (*ru'ya al-khalq*) and forgetting the truth (*nisyān al-ḥaqq*) settles in the heart—for leadership positions are always sought by worldly people.

People, including those with knowledge, say strange things. They blame me for walking alone; and they think that it's too much for me to visit a poor person—and if they see me smiling they look down at me.

What a surprise! This was the way of the Messenger (ﷺ) and His Companions (*radiyAllāhu ʿanhum*). People have developed a system for gaining prestige.

It is no wonder that when you have fallen from the eyes of Allāh, He makes you fall from the eyes of His creation.

Many people work hard to gain prestige but never achieve their goal, and people pay no attention to them. So they miss out on the greater goal.

So my brothers! Focus on mending your intentions (*islāḥ al-niyya*) and refrain from showing-off to people, and let your main pillar (of support) be straight with Allāh. This was how the *Salaf* gained elevation and fortune.

So beware of what people do today. Compared to the alertness of the *Salaf*, people today are considered to be asleep.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-THREE

Guidance is from Allāh

By Allāh! If Allāh does not choose for a child to become well mannered, then it is of no use to try to discipline him.

When Allāh prefers a person, He will nurture him from early childhood, He will guide him to righteousness, make useful things beloved to him and make him accompany good people. He will make him dislike the opposite of these things, prevent him from indulging in silly and shameful matters. He will take him by the hand each time he falls.

On the other hand, when Allāh dislikes someone. He will cause him to trip a lot, to remain confused, and strip him of a strong desire to seek a high status. He occupies him with shameful acts instead of righteous deeds.

If this person asks: 'Why is this happening to me?' Then the response would be:

فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ

"[it is] because of what your hands have gained."
[*al-Shūra* (42): 30]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-FOUR

And in Your Own Selves, Will You Not Then See?

This speaking soul (i.e. the human being) is one of the greatest proofs of the existence of the Creator (*wujūd al-Khāliq*). It causes the body to move according to its will and to seek its benefits. It elevated itself, learned about heavenly orbits and learned many sciences. It realised the Creator by contemplating the creation and was not veiled from doing so by a thick curtain.

However, the essence and location of the soul are not yet determined. We do not know where it came from, where it will end up, or how it became attached to the body. All of this proves that there is a Controller and a Creator for the soul.

This is enough proof for the existence of the Creator. For had the soul made itself, then it would have understood its nature.

So glorified be He, glorified be He.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-FIVE

The Virtue of People of Knowledge

Glory be to the One who granted people scholars (*'ulamā'*) and jurists (*fuqahā'*) who understand the objectives (*maqṣūd*) of religious orders. They are the preservers of religion, so may Allāh reward them handsomely. The devil (*Shayṭān*) avoids them out of fear (*kawf*) from them, for they are able to harm him and he is unable to harm them.

The devil deceives those with little knowledge (*'ilm*) and understanding (*fahm*). One of his most amazing deceptions is that he deceives them into abandoning seeking knowledge (*tarq al-'ilm*), and into attacking those who do. Little do they understand that this is an attack (*qadh*) on the Sharī'ah itself. The Messenger (ﷺ) said: "Deliver (what I say) to others."[167]

And his Lord ordered him to:

بَلِّغْ

"Deliver (the message)"

[*al-Mā'idah* (5):67]

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[167] Bukhārī, #3461—on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhumā*)

If a person does not busy himself with seeking knowledge then how will he transmit religion to others?

Things like this were said by many major ascetics (*kibār al-zuhhād*). Bishr al-Ḥāfī told 'Abbās Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīm: 'Do not sit with seekers of ḥadīth (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*).'

And told Isḥāq Ibn al-Daif: 'You are a student of ḥadīth (*ṣāḥib al-ḥadīth*) so I would like for you not to attend my sessions again.'

He explained his position by saying: "ḥadīth is a form of *fitnah*, except for those who seek it for Allāh's sake, and if it is not acted upon, then it is better to abandon it.' This is strange of him. How did he know that ḥadīth students were not sincere or that they do not act upon the knowledge?

There are two types of actions, the first includes obligatory actions. Everyone is obligated to perform them. The second includes voluntary actions (*nāfila*) and they are not obligatory (*farḍ*). Busying with [learning] ḥadīth (*tashāgul bi'l-ḥadīth*) is better than performing voluntary fasting (*ṣawm*) and prayer (*ṣalah*).

I think that he was referring to his (own) method of praying at night (*tahajjud*) and being always in state of hunger (*ju'*). These are things that we cannot blame others for abandoning. If what he meant was not to learn the science of ḥadīth (*'ulūm al-ḥadīth*) excessively, then this is also wrong, because all forms of seeking ḥadīth (*talab al-ḥadīth*) are praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*).

If people abandoned ḥadīth then only those like Bishr would be left to give verdicts (*fatawa*)!

So beware of paying attention to the opinion of he who is not a jurist (f*aqih*). And never mind his popular name. May Allāh forgive him.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-SIX

Seeks Allāh's Pleasure at the expense of People's Anger, Allāh Will Protect Him from them

A wise man preserves what Allāh has ordained, even if doing so results in angering people. In fact, he who seeks people's pleasure by angering Allāh, then Allāh will flip people's hearts against him.

Al-Ma'mūn told one of his companions: 'Never obey me in anything that is displeasing to Allāh, otherwise Allāh will turn me against you.' When Al-Ma'mūn asked Ṭāhir Ibn al-Ḥusayn to (be excessive in) maiming al-Ameen by hanging his decapitated head, Ṭahir obeyed Al-Ma'mūn's instruction, but was unable to look him in the face after that.

Another time a Sultān asked to be given the title *"The King of Kings"*, so he asked the jurists and they said it was permissible for him to do so.

However, Al-Māwardī said it was not permissible, so the Sultān became fond of him.

There are many such stories.

A person must intend to obey Allāh even if that resulted in angering people, because he will end up getting humiliated and the same people he tried to please will turn against him.

So he will loose from both ends.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-SEVEN

Selecting Friends and Companions Carefully

A person must investigate the background of those he intends to befriend, accompany, marry or give in marriage. He must then study people's appearances, because a good appearance is an indication of a good heart.

People will always revert back to their origins. Someone who has a bad upbringing and foundation will rarely have a good quality. A beautiful woman who comes from a bad home will not be decent. The same applies to a friend and a companion.

Therefore always befriend a person who has a good foundation whom will always be worried about being humiliated. Accompanying such a person will always be safe, with rare exceptions.

'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz asked the advice of a companion; so the companion said: 'As for religious people, they are not looking forward for a leadership position. And you do not want those who run after worldly gain; so stick to honourable people, because they will always be keen on avoiding anything that will pollute their honour.'

Once Al-Mu'tasim asked a companion of his: 'Why was my brother Al-Ma'mūn successful in selecting his aids and I was not?'

He responded, 'Because your brother investigated the foundations of his aids, while you did not.'

So Al-Mu'tasim said, 'Your response is more painful to me than all of my previous agony from my selections.'

As for seeking good appearances, when a person's appearance is good then his inside will most likely be good, and vice-versa.

In addition to investigating a person's foundation and appearance, he must be tried before being accompanied.

It is important to always be cautious.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-EIGHT

Wisdom is Necessary for Achieving Goals and Overcoming Enemies

A wise person must always contemplate the end results and be careful of them.

He must not assume that the way things are going at any given moment will continue. He must prepare for changing times and for the status quo to discontinue. He must look into the shame that results from achieving a temporary (forbidden) lust and the ignorance resulting from being too lazy (to seek knowledge).

Deceiving an intelligent person requires utilising subtle tricks, because an intelligent person notices the slightest of motions. In the book of "tricks" there were many ideas that sharpen one's intellect. I have mentioned some of them in my book "The Intelligent Ones".

If you have fallen victim to an intelligent person, then you must be cautious and develop different ways to trick him subtly, just as a chess player studies his moves well.

Many people try to bribe an intelligent person in order to get their way with him. He must be even more cautious of their attempts.

The person you must be most cautious of is someone whom you have previously harmed, for by harming him you have planted the tree of hatred in his heart. So do not pay attention to his attempts to be nice to you, even if he swears; so be cautious of him.

It is not wise for you to punish someone, or to do something bad to him knowing that this will only renew the hatred he has towards you. When you think that he has no feelings of hatred toward you anymore, he strikes back and sets you up for evil.

Therefore, never live with someone who you have previously harmed, for grudges should never be trusted. When you find your enemy in a state of weakness, then show grace to him so he forgets your animosity and will not assume you are carrying a grudge against him. You will thus be able to get what you want from him.

In fact, it is a sign of bad judgment for you to continuously express animosity to your enemy. The best way to deal with enemies is to be kind with them until you assume position to be able to break them. At minimum, being gentle with them will make them stop harming you; as some of them may feel embarrassed to do so after you have shown them grace. Being gentle may cause your enemy's heart to change (and incline) towards you.

Some of the *Salaf* used to send gifts to those who used to speak ill of them, so in the short term, this will cause their harm to stop, and perhaps hearts to change—and provide them time to contemplate their rebuttal strategy.

The best educators are those whose mind contemplates the end results.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-NINE

Seek Secrecy When Achieving Your Goals

Most people are unable to keep a secret (*sirr*). When the secret they have exposed to others becomes wide spread, they blame those whom they told the secret to. This is strange. They were unable to keep the secret to themselves, yet blame others for not keeping it as well.

A Prophetic tradition says: "Seek secrecy when achieving your goals."[168]

Keeping a secret is difficult and telling it to others brings comfort, especially if the secret entails an illness, a worry or being in love. Yet it is important for a deceiver to keep his attempts of deception a secret. If such a secret is exposed, then the entire deception scheme falls apart and this is not excusable.

Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) used to plan a trip, he used to pretend to be going in a different direction.[169]

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[168] Ibn Ḥibbān in *Rawdah al-ʿUqalāʾ*, #187 and Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Ḥilyah*, 5/215. Al-Albānī declared it ṣaḥīḥ in *al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, #1453

[169] Bukhārī, #2947 and Muslim, #2769 on the authority of Kaʿb Ibn Mālik (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

If someone says, 'I only talk to trustworthy people.' Then we tell him, 'Every matter that becomes known to more than two people is no longer a secret.'

Perhaps your trustworthy friend does not hold secrets well; a person with strong discipline never conveys a secret to others.

It is a sign of weakness to convey a secret to one's wife or children. The amount of wealth you have should be considered a secret, for telling others about it may result in them wishing bad for you, or blaming you for how little the wealth is.

Calamities (*maṣā'ib*) ought to be concealed as secrets, because discussing them will please the enemy and displease loved ones.

A person ought to keep his age a secret also, because if he is too elderly others will consider him too old for many things, and if he is too young then others will treat him like an adolescent for many things.

Many people were careless in talking negatively about a leader and this lead them to their (detention and) demise.

It was said (poetry):

Beware of your enemy once, but beware of your friend a thousand times,
A friend may turn into an enemy, and he will know how to harm you best.

Some people might reveal a secret to a wife or a friend and become hostage to them because of this. He becomes unable to divorce his wife or to abandon his friend fearing that they do not reveal his secret to others.

A strict person treats people according to what he sees of them. His chest must not become too tight for his secret. This way, if his wife or friend abandons him, they would not be able to harm him.

When a person is alone he must be careful not to behave freely unless he is certain he is not being watched by others.

He who is granted a sharp mind will be lead to the truth before death.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY

Things That Help in Memorisation

I have seen nothing that is more difficult than memorising knowledge (*ḥifẓ lil-ʿilm*), especially having to repeat things that are not enjoyable, such as *fiqh* issues.

On the other hand, there is pleasure (*ladha*) in repeating poetry (*shiʿr*) in spite of its difficulty. After saying it a few times, poetry becomes difficult to repeat as well. A person enjoys ḥadīth, poetry and reading books more, because a person comes across something new every time. Similarly, copying knowledge is enjoyable.

A person must spend most of his life in repeating knowledge, especially for a youth. This causes knowledge to stick firmly in one's mind. When he becomes tired of repetition, he should revert to copying knowledge. Later on in the future, he will be glad that he did so.

He who does not memorise will feel guilty in the future. In fact, it is more difficult to re-memorise something that you had forgotten than to keep something memorised by repeating it over and over.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-ONE

Virtues of Seclusion (*al-khalwa al-nāfiʿ*) away from Others

Nothing is more beneficial than remaining away from people, especially for the ascetic (*zahid*) and scholar (*ʿalim*). People either make fun of you when you make a mistake, or are eager for you to make a mistake, or are envious of your blessings.

How beautiful is seclusion (*ʿuzla*). You will be free from the dirt of backbiting (ghiba), the harms of pretentiousness, concealing animosity and wasting time. The heart remains free from being preoccupied with mixing with people, so it looks after its worldly and heavenly needs.

Contrarily, a companion occupies you from doing tasks that are important to you. This is just like a person who intends to travel but becomes occupied with vain talk instead of preparing for the trip, until the horn of the ship is blown (to signal departure).

If seclusion had only the virtue of enabling contemplating the departure from this world, it would be enough.

For a scholar and an ascetic, there is no real seclusion. Books of scholars keep them company and talk to them. Looking into the affairs of the *Salaf* keeps them steadfast, and thinking about past events brings them relief.

Knowledge (*ʿilm*) elevates them to a status of fully knowing Allāh (*maqām al-maʿrifa*) to the point of loving Him, then their pleasure will double, and they will become preoccupied with this knowledge.

A scholar will enjoy his seclusion with his loved one, and he will act upon the knowledge that he has gained.

Similarly, an ascetic person's acts of worship keep him company. If the veil is removed for him to see (the reality of) his Lord, then he will no longer feel the presence of creation, and they will not feel his presence either.

Thus both of them went into seclusion and avoided harmful things, so they are in fact not alone. These two types of men have relieved people of their harm, and were relieved from the harm of others.

They are good examples for worshipers and a guide for seekers. A listener benefits from listening to them, their speeches bring tears to the eyes, and their reverence becomes wide spread.

If someone wishes to be like them, then let him bear the difficulties of seclusion. His perseverance will bring him sweetness of honey.

I seek refuge with Allāh from a scholar who accompanies wealthy people and kings. He pulls them towards himself and they pull him towards themselves, and he cons and gets conned. He only achieves worldly things on the account of his religion.

Where is his pride not to humiliate himself to wrongdoers? Those who do not worry about such things will never feel the taste of knowledge, and will never understand its objectives. It is as if he found himself in a barren dessert.

Similarly, whenever an ascetic person intermingles with others, he shows-off and (riskily) becomes a hypocrite. So he loses on both worldly and heavenly rewards.

Therefore ask Him for a sweet seclusion, and a tasty abandonment of evil that leads to communicating with Him to seek salvation.

He is indeed near and answers prayer.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-TWO

Preparation for the Day of Departure

How foolish is the one who does not prepare for death (*mawt*), knowing that he does not know when it will strike.

Even more foolish is a person who has approached seventy years of age and does not prepare for the battle of death.

Youth say when we reach old age we will stop sinning, then what should an old person say?

By Allāh! It does not make sense for an old man to laugh or joke (too much). He comes towards this world when this world has rejected him. This only weakens his abilities and his intellect.

What is left for a sixty year old man?

If he hopes (*tamʿ*) to reach seventy, he will only be able to do so with much hardship. If he attempts to stand up, he must push with his hands off the floor, and if he walks he will become overly breathless. He sees the pleasures of this life but is unable to enjoy them.

If he eats his stomach will hurt because of indigestion (and constipation). If he has sexual relations he will harm his wife. And if he becomes sick, it takes him too long to regain his strength. He lives just like a captive.

Then if he hopes to reach eighty, he will crawl to it like a baby.

The eighth decade is full of hardships for he who reaches it.

A wise man is he who understands the nature of time. Before puberty he is a child and is not accountable for what he does. Some children do however, possess great intellect that urges them to earn nobility and sciences from a young age.

When he reaches puberty, he must then know this is the time period for fighting against lusts and gaining knowledge. And when he has children, he must work hard to earn sustenance. And when he reaches forty, then he is going downhill towards his inevitable abode.

It is as if a person climbs a staircase until he reaches forty, then climbs down.

Once he reaches forty, he must pay most attention to the afterlife, and must prepare for departure. Although this also applies to a twenty year old, a youngster is easier to come back than an older man.

Once he reaches sixty then Allāh has left him with no excuse. He must wholeheartedly attend to gathering his goods to travel, and he must understand with each additional day he lives through, is an extra gain that he had not planned for, especially if he becomes weaker.

Then the older he gets, the more active (in worship) he must become. When he reaches eighty, then nothing remains except departure, and all that is left is sorrow over carelessness or worship in spite of weakness.

We ask Allāh for a full alertness that repels oblivion away, and we ask Him for good deeds that prevent us from guilt on the day of departure.

And Allāh is the Guide.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-THREE

People of *Kalām* (Deductive Reasoning) Gain Only Sorrow and Waste Time

The *Salaf* forbade from indulging in rhetoric (*kalām*) for reasons that are great. First, a person often wishes to see that which his sight is unable to capture. This lends to confusion because if we contemplate the essence of the Creator, we will become confused and our senses become distorted. We cannot comprehend something with no beginning, for we only comprehend objects and attributes and nothing else.

If we contemplate His Actions, we will notice how He erects a building then ruins it, without being able to understand His wisdom.

So a wise person must stop looking at something he cannot comprehend. It is enough for the mind to establish the existence of the Creator through His creation, and by the sending of Prophets and contemplating their miracles.

If after listening to Allāh's saying:

حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَٰمَ ٱللَّهِ

> "Until he listens to Allāh's Words."
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (9):6]

he concludes that the Qur'ān is Allāh's Speech.

As for he who wants to act intelligent by saying, 'The recitation is that which is being recited or not, and the reading is the same as that being read or not ...' will be wasting his time for nothing. The objective is for him to act upon his knowledge.

It is said that a king once sent a letter ordering a group of his appointees to do such and such task. So they all did as he ordered except for one of them. He spent his time thinking about the king's letter; what type of ink it was written with? Did the king write it while sitting or standing? He continued to do so until the king arrived, so he ordered this appointee to be executed and rewarded everyone else.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-FOUR

The True Pleasures of the World

Seekers of the world (*dunya*) have neglected its true pleasures (*ladha*): the honour of knowledge (*sharf al-'ilm*), the flower of chastity (*ẓahra al-'aff*), the pride of guarding one's valuables, the glory of contentment (*qanā'a*) and the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of helping others.

He who only enjoys food and sexual relations is ignorant of true pleasure, because these things are not sought for in and of themselves. They are sought to gain bodily strength and offspring. Sexual pleasure only takes place for a short period of time, and weakens the body.

And what pleasure is there in gathering too much wealth? Its collector becomes enslaved to it, spending the night worrying about it, while small amounts of it call him for more amounts.

And where is the pleasure in food? When a person is hungry then all types of food become the same to him. If he eats too much then he will harm himself.

'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*) said, '*Fitnah* was established on three pillars: Women [which is] *Shayṭān*'s set trap; Alcohol [which is]

Shaytān's swift sword; and wealth [which is] *Shaytān*'s poisonous arrow.'

He who sways too much toward women will never enjoy life. And he who enjoys alcohol will never enjoy a sound mind, and he who loves wealth will be a slave to it for as long as he lives.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-FIVE

Drawings Similitude between the Creator and His Creation is the Source of All Misguidance

The main source of all problems in matters of creed (*'aqa'id*) arises from drawing similitude's (*qiyās*) between the affairs of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and creation (*makhlūq*).

When philosophers (and people of rhetoric) opined that no object originated from nothing, they came up the doctrine of the eternity of the universe. And when they noticed that it was nearly impossible for someone to possess all the details of knowledge, they said that Allāh only knows generalities, and not the details of things.

And when they saw that objects never come back after being destroyed, they denied resurrection of the body and limited it to souls. Thus everyone who compared the Creator to creation ended up in disbelief (*kufr*). Mujassimah entered *kufr* because they claimed Allāh's attributes to be just as they imagined them.

There are those also who try to understand Allāh's actions according to our standards. So they considered it wrong to slaughter animals, to be inflicted with illness, for a foolish person to be wealthy and for a hardworking man to be poor. This might be true by human standards, but Allāh's standards may not be understood by anyone.

All that should matter to us is that He exists, that He is All-Wise and that He is the Owner of all things. Comparing His actions to those of humans is sheer ignorance. Do not you see how the first of objectors was Iblis when he said,

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ

"I am better than him."

[*al-A'rāf* (7):12]

And then his viceroy Abū'l-'Alā Al-Ma'arī said (in poetry):

He saw from You that which he did not like so he became irreligious.

We ask Allāh to guide us to submit to Him:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا

"O Allāh do not misguide our hearts after You had guided us."

[*Āl-'Imrān* (3):8]

If we are unable to analyse His actions, then how will we understand His essence? And how could we compare His actions to ours? Should not we wonder about how Allāh rejected our Prophet's (ﷺ) request to seek forgiveness for his mother and uncle, how he (ﷺ) used to go hungry while the entire world was under his control, and how his (ﷺ) Companions were killed while victory was in His Lord's Hands?

So how could we object to an Owner whose wisdom has been established and whose authority is settled?

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-SIX

A High Status Can Only Be Gained Through Hardship

I have noticed everything that is valuable will take a lot of time and effort to achieve. And since knowledge is the most noble of things (*ashrāf al-ashyā'*), it can only be acquired through hard work; this means staying up at night and abandoning lusts and comforts.

A scholar once said, 'I spent years yearning for a type of food (*ḥarīsah*). I could not buy it because it was sold at the same time as my lesson took place.'

Similar to this is gaining wealth. It requires travelling, taking risks and lots of hardship. Also similar to this is gaining a good reputation through being generous as well as bravery. All this is only attained through risking one's self.

A poet once said:

Had it not been for hardship,
then all people would have become masters,
Being generous makes one poor,

and being brave causes one to get killed.

Earning reward in the Hereafter is similar to this as well. It increases proportionally to the amount of effort, money and self that is exerted. It is also proportional to the amount of patience (*sabr*) one has for losing a loved one and preventing one from expressing extreme grief.

Asceticism (*zuhd*) also requires putting effort into avoiding lusts (*hawā*). And chastity (*'iffaf*) is attained through repelling gluttony (*sharh*).

Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) was only named:

أَيُّهَا ٱلصِّدِّيقُ

"The truthful one."

[*Yusuf* (12):46]

because of all that he suffered.

Some people strive to acquire all virtues. They seek all sciences and are active in all fields. If their bodies become weak, then their intentions (*niyya*) make up for them. They are first to perform these actions, yet they belittle the perfection of their actions and seek excuses for their deficiencies. Others thank Allāh for enabling them to do such good deeds, while others do not even notice what they have done, because they believe that they belong to their Lord, and so decrees everything they do.

On the other hand, there are lazy followers of lusts. Their immediate enjoyment of their lusts causes them grief and sorrow in the long run. He who studies the stories of both Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) and Mā'iz will see the difference between the two and will understand loss and gain.

I thought about how difficult it is to extract pearls from the sea. And he who contemplates what I have mentioned above will understand many such examples.

A wise person keeps in mind how brief the *"working season"* is, and how long the *"accountability season"* is, so he will take advantage of every moment and will try to gain every virtue. Once such opportunities pass, there will be no way for them to return back.

If a person was to ponder the ḥadīth: "It will be said to the companion of the Qur'ān, 'Recite and elevate (through the levels of the Paradise)! For verily your position in Paradise will be at the last verse you recite.'"[170]

Then he would quickly memorise the entire Qur'ān.

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[170] Abū Dāwūd, #1464 and Tirmidhī, #2914—see Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr *(radiy-Allāhu 'anhuma)*. The ḥadīth is ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-SEVEN

True Belief Requires Surrendering and Contentment

A true believer (*mu'min*) is not one who merely performs ritualistic worship (*'ibādāt*) and avoids prohibitions (*mahẓhurāt*).

Rather he is one who has perfected his belief (*kāmil al-īmān*). He never objects (to Allāh's decree), the more hardship he undergoes the stronger his belief and submission becomes.

He might pray and his prayer is not answered, yet his belief is never affected for he realises he is owned and that his Master directs him as He pleases. If he ever objects then he exits the state of servitude (*maqām al-'ubudiyya*) and enters the state of debate (*maqām al-munadhara*), which is what happened to *Iblīs*.

The effect of strong faith becomes clear at the time of hardship (*balā'*).

Some people might wonder why Allāh allowed for [Prophet] Yaḥyā (*'alayhi as-salām*) to be slaughtered by an evil person, and for other Prophets and believers to be harmed. It would be a form of disbelief (*kufr*) to assume that Allāh is unable to defend the Prophets.

The only thing that can be done is to surrender to the Owner. He feeds some disbelievers (*kuffār*) and starves some believers (*mu'minūn*). He keeps wrongdoers (*fāsiqūn*) healthy and some among the righteous (*mutaqīn*) people ill.

[Prophet] Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) cried over his missing son for eighty years and never lost hope. When his second son was taken he said:

عَسَى ٱللَّهُ أَن يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا

"May Allāh return them both to me."
[*Yusuf* (12):83]

[Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) made *du'ā'* against Fir'awn but was only answered forty years later, although Fir'awn used to kill Prophets (*'alayhi as-salām*) and he crucified the magicians (who believed in Mūsā) and severed their hands.

Many calamities strike a noble person only for him to increase in his surrendering (*taslīm*) and contentment (*riḍa*). This is when we understand the verse:

رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ

"Allāh is pleased with them."
[*al-Bayyinah* (98):8]

Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī said, "People behave the same during good times (*'āfiya*), but they differ in times of hardship (*balā'*)."

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-EIGHT

The Danger of *Kalām* on the Creeds of Laypeople

Those who cause the most harm to laypeople are people who practise *Kalām*, for they mix up (and confuse) their belief system.

One of the worst things for a layperson, who is well versed in pillars of prayer or usury, is to attend circles of *Kalām*. Instead of encouraging him to perform prayer on time, the preacher says, 'The Qur'ān is an intrinsic attribute of Allāh, and that which we recite is a creature of Allāh'

Causing the layman not to revere the Qur'ān as much and to begin swearing by it falsely.

Woe to the *Mutakallim*! He should have known that Allāh discussed certain things in a manner that makes them easier to comprehend by people. He called the Ka'bah: His House, and mentioned being above the Throne (*istawā' 'alā al-'arsh*), and mentioned the (Divine) Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) of Hand (*yad*), Hearing (*sam'*), Seeing (*baṣr*) and Eyes (*'ayn*); and that He Descends (*yanẓilu*) to the lowest heaven and that

He Laughs (*yadhak*). He only mentioned these things in such a way so we can comprehend them. His status is higher than to actually have organs.[171]

Allāh also spoke highly of the Qur'ān and forbade someone who is not in the state of purification (*taharah*) from touching it. Yet people of *Kalām* (*ahlul-kalām*) said that it was permissible to use it for cleaning one's self after answering the call of nature!

These people are defying the *Sharīʿah* because they allow humiliating what Allāh has glorified. And does *Kalām* get people closer to the truth? If this were the case then its people who participate in it, would not have differed amongst themselves.

The early generation never spoke of this and jurists from all localities forbade discussing such issues—they knew well what should and should not be discussed. And he who is not content with the creed of the Companions, Imām Ahmad or Imām Al-Shāfiʿī, then we refuse them, regardless of who he is.

Let us also think about it. Has not Allāh forbidden us from dealing is usury by saying:

لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَوٰٓا

"Do not deal in Usury."

[*Al-ʿImrān* (3):130],

and forbade us from fornication by saying:

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزِّنَىٰٓ

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[171] May Allāh have mercy on Ibn Al-Jawzī. What he said here is not true. These attributes are real Attributes of Allāh, not metaphors, and were not only mentioned this way to make us understand them easily.

> "Do not go near fornication."
> [*al-Isrā'* (17):32]

So what good is it to dwell into rhetorical topics such as, 'reading and that which is read', 'recitation and that which is recited' and what is 'ancient and accidental?'

If someone says, 'But it is important for us to learn the proper creed.'

Then we say, 'The way of the *Salaf* is the clearest of ways. We do not say so out of imitating them, but because we have evidence for this.

We did learn this by knowing the *Jawhar* (Essence) and *'Arad* (Attribute) and so on, but from textual evidence and with the help of sound intellect, and not searching into whatever is not needed.'

Yet, this is not the place for elaboration.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-NINE

The Reality of Death

Just like everyone else, I feel sad for the death of a relative, and I feel sad each time I imagine how bodies get disintegrated in the grave.

I used to read some Prophetic traditions but never used to think about them. For example his (ﷺ) saying: "The soul of a believer is a bird that sits on the trees of Paradise until Allāh orders it to return to its owner's body on the day of resurrection."[172]

I believe that departure will be towards comfort. This body is nothing because it will disintegrate and revived on Judgment Day, so people should not think about its disintegration. Instead people must think about how souls will relocate towards comfort. This way a person will not feel too sad, and will realise that meeting loved ones will be near.

Sorrow remains because people are attached to appearances. A person only sees a good figure that disintegrated, so he feels sad for that. A body is not *'the human'*; it is only the thing in which the soul rides. Souls do not get disintegrated in any way.

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[172] Mālik in the *Muwaṭṭa'* 1/240/49 and Nasāī 4/108/2072.

You must not feel sad for the disintegration of the body of a loved one.

Remember the joy that souls will receive and the nearness of resurrection and the quickness of meeting.

Thinking about such things will lessen sadness and make things easy.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY

The Importance of Preserving Speech

A wise person must not discuss the traits of another person in private, unless that person practices this bad trait openly. He must also wait and see people's reaction to this trait before discussing such a trait.

It happened before that a person mentioned the Sultān negatively in the company of a person whom he had trusted, but then news reached the Sultān.

It is also important for one to conceal his *Madhhab*, because revealing it only brings animosity.

When Al-Sharīf Abū Ja'far openly opposed the al-Ashā'irah, Al-Muqtadī put him in jail until he died.

The leader only cares about maintaining calm among the people, and not adhering to a *Madhhab*.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-ONE

It is a Must to Surrender to the Wisdom of the Creator

I have seen many foolish people (*mughafilūn*) venting anger (*saqṭ*) towards their destiny. Some of them developed weaker faith (*qila al-īmān*) by objecting destiny.

Some of them turned away from Islām in disbelief (*kufr*) because of believing that destiny is foolish play. They say, 'What use is it for a Creator who is in no need of harming us to create people then have them disintegrate (after death)?'

I responded to some of those who talked about this, 'I am willing to discuss this issue with you only if you are present minded. If you talk without contemplation and fairness then talking to you is a wasteful exercise. Woe to you! Bring your intellect and listen to what I have to say.'

It has been established that Allāh is the Owner (*al-Mālik*), and that the Owner has the right to control what He owns however He wishes. It has also been established that Allāh is All-Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*), and someone who is wise never acts in vain.

Yet, I know you are not comfortable admitting that Allāh is All-Wise. I heard that Jalinous said: ‘I am not sure whether Allāh is wise or not.’

He said so because he noticed how things are erected then taken apart in this world. He compared Allāh to His creation, for to us tearing something apart after erecting it is meaningless.

We respond, ‘How is it you have determined that taking something apart after erecting it is unwise?

Was not it through your intellect that was subsequently given to you by the Creator?

How then could He grant you perfect intellect yet be deprived of it himself?’

In fact, this was the same problem that Iblīs confronted. He put down Allāh’s Wisdom (*ḥikmah*) using his own intellect (*‘aql*). Had he contemplated (*tafakkur*) upon the realisation that the Creator of his intellect (*‘aql*) is Most Wise (*a‘lā min al-‘aql*). It is by His wisdom that He created intellects.

If a fair person thinks about this, he will no longer have any doubt. Allāh alluded to this when saying:

أَمْ لَهُ ٱلْبَنَٰتُ وَلَكُمُ ٱلْبَنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

“Or is it that He has the females and you have the males.”
[*al-Ṭūr* (52):39]

Meaning: He kept the deficient (girls) and gave you the perfect (boys)?

So the only thing we can do is to admit our deficiency and to say:

'This is the act of a Wise Knowledgeable One, and we do not understand the wisdom behind it.'

[Prophet] Mūsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) did not realise the wisdom behind defecting the ship and killing the young boy, yet when Al-Khidr explained to him, he submitted.

So let us be with our Creator like Mūsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) was with Al-Khidr.

Do we not see how nicely prepared food is eaten before it turns into that which we know? We do not object to such things because we understand their overall benefit.

So why can not Allāh's actions have a hidden benefit (*māniʿ*) as well that we are unaware of?

The most ignorant of ignorant people (*ajhal al-juhāl*) is a slave who seeks to know the secrets of his master (*sirr mawlāhu*). He must surrender (*taslīm*), not object (*iʿtirāḍ*).

In fact, had the only objective (*maqṣūd*) of the occurrence of strange (*ʿajība*) things be to test our submission (to Allāh's Will), it would have been enough.

I have contemplated about the objective of death (*maqṣūd bi'l-mawt*). Had there been no death, people would think they had no Creator (*al-Khāliq*). We do not see Allāh, yet after death the soul will realise so many new things. After the soul returns, it will be ready to be near Allāh in Paradise (*jannah*) because of the high level of belief it has gained. It will then deserve to be told:

ٱرْجِعِىٓ
إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً (٢٨) فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى (٢٩)

> "Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter you, then, among My honoured slaves."
>
> [*al-Fajr* (89):28-29]

As for a non-believing (*kāfir*) soul, it will continue not to believe after death in spite of seeing all the wonders of Allāh, so it will be deserving of punishment. Allāh said:

وَلَوْ رُدُّوا۟ لَعَادُوا۟ لِمَا نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ

> "But if they were returned (to the world), they would certainly revert to that which they were forbidden."
>
> [*al-An'ām* (6):28]

We ask Allāh for a sound, surrendering mind that understands its limitations and never objects to its Creator. Woe to he who objects. Would his objection repel destiny? He will only benefit shame.

We seek refuge with Allāh from being let down.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-TWO

The Reward of the Hereafter Serves as Condolence for any Calamity

A believer (*mu'min*) must not become annoyed with illness or death and maintain patience (*ṣabr*) as much as possible. He needs patience to try to earn reward and demonstrate acceptance of destiny (*riḍā bi'l-qaḍā'*), for verily soon the pain will be gone.

Let a healthy person think about the times when he was sick. What happened to those times? They went away yet the reward remained. Similarly, the sweetness of following lusts (*ḥalāwa al-ladhāt*) escapes sooner, but the punishment remains. The time for using destiny as an excuse vanishes, but the blame remains.

Does not death relieve a person from the heavy burdens he carries?

So let a sick person contemplate the comfort he will find after his soul departs just as he contemplates good health after drinking bitter medicine.

A person must not feel anxious when death is mentioned either for it is the ride (i.e. the body) that dies, not the rider (the soul). The rider will end up in Paradise or in the Hellfire.

A person must only worry about gaining virtues and missing out on them. A fortunate person is he who becomes able to gain goodness and always takes advantage of goodness because he realises his status in Paradise will rise the more virtues he attains in his lifetime on earth.

Life is short and virtues are many, so hurry to take advantage. Afterwards, resting will be long and happiness will be great.

When a person imagines the continual pleasure in Paradise, then every hardship will seem easy to him.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-THREE

People's Forgetfulness of Death is Part of Allāh's Wisdom

One day I attended the funeral (*janazah*) of a youth who was full of life. I noticed that the attendees exaggerated in condemning (*dhamm*) life and those who dwell on earth. They also condemned those who were negligent (*ghāfilūn*) in preparing for their death (*mawt*).

I responded, 'What you said is true; however listen to what I have to say...'

If a wise person knew how near his ending will be, his intellect will obligate him to act promptly and to be worrisome.

Some people went as far as to stray in the wilderness, and to spend their days in hunger and their nights staying awake. They would stay near graveyards so they could die more quickly.

Truly, what they had worried about deserves more than this.

However, sound intellect realises that the body is the soul's ride, and that one must take it easy with the ride in order to reach the destination. Staying up all night and having excessive worry will harm the body.

The human body is delicate; if a person refrains from eating fatty foods his brain will dry up, staying up all night makes one loose his desires, and if he continues to be sad his heart will become ill. So one must be gentle with his body by eating beneficial foods, and he must protect his heart by repelling harmful sorrows. Otherwise his body will deplete quickly.

Then Sharīʿah came to confirm what the sound intellect determined. He (ﷺ) said: "Your body has rights over you; your wife has rights over you. So fast sometimes, eat sometimes, and sleep sometimes and stay up sometimes."[173]

And he (ﷺ) said: "It is enough of a sin for someone not to take care of those for whom he is responsible."[174]

He also encouraged getting married. And when a person loses his emotional side, then his wife turns into a widow. His children turn into orphans. There is no justification for someone to occupy himself with gaining knowledge (*ʿilm*) while he is stressed out to this point.

If you want proof for what I have said, then look at how Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) was. He used to mix his fear (of Allāh) with joking, and used to race with ʿAʿishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*) and married numerously. He used to take care of his body by drinking water that has been collected overnight, and used to eat sweets and meat.

And had there not been a degree of oblivion (*ghafla*) towards death, then scholars would not have written books, and knowledge would not have been preserved, and neither would have ḥadīth. This is because he who is always thinking about death will never document, gather or author books of knowledge.

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[173] Reference has already been mentioned

[174] Reference has already been mentioned

So do not be surprised at people when they seem to forget about death, for this is a blessing from Allāh that aids in going about life and worldly affairs.

The form of oblivion that is worthy of blame is the one that leads to carelessness (*ihmāl*) and not holding one's self accountable (*muḥāsaba li'l-nafs)*, leading to wasting time without preparation for the afterlife. Sometimes oblivion leads to sins.

On the other hand, if oblivion is in the right amount, then it would be just as important as adding salt to food. It is a must, and if it is too much, then food becomes inedible.

So understand what I have said, and never say: 'So and so it very alert, he never sleeps at night, and so and so is oblivious, he sleeps most of the night.'

Oblivion that brings benefit should not be condemned.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-FOUR

Regarding False Asceticism (*zuhd*)

He who likes to meet with people is usually someone without bearing commitments to them.

A person whose heart (*qalb*) is preoccupied (*mashghūl*) with Allāh will always run away from people. And when the heart is empty (*farāgh*) of knowing Allāh, then it will become filled with knowing His Creation. He will act for them and for their sake, and will be destroyed due to showing-off (*riyā'*) without knowing so.

I noticed some of those who wear the clothing of poverty (*faqr*) and Ṣūfīs wearing clothes that cost less than one dinār, yet they have a lot of money and indulge in tasty foodstuff. They act upon arrogance (*kibr*) and show off. They get near to people of Dunyā and avoid scholars. They only refuse gifts so they become known to be ascetic, they pretend to be religious but are cunning like foxes, and are eager to achieve their needs like a vicious dog.

I say, "*Subḥān-Allāh*! Only the clothes are ascetic!"

Has not he heard of the Prophet's (ﷺ) saying: "Allāh loves for His bounties to be seen upon His servant."[175]

And I seek refuge with Allāh from *"seeing"* one's self (*ru'ya al-nafs*) and from showing-off to others (*ru'ya al-khalq*), because he who sees himself will become arrogant (*mutaqabbir*). An arrogant person is foolish (*aḥmaq*) because surely there will be another person whom is better than him one way or another. He who shows-off to people actually worships them without knowing.

As for he who works for Allāh's sake, will keep away from people. And if they come near him, he conceals his actions to cause them to stay away from him.

Some people show-off but do not realise that they are doing so. They stop walking in the market place, visiting friends, and buying things by themselves. Such behaviour does bring prestige but only to real scholars.

Bishr Al-Ḥāfī used to sit in a spice shop.

And better yet was our Prophet (ﷺ) for he used to buy his goods and carry them himself.

ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allahu ʿanhu*) once went to the market place and bought a garment while he was the leader of believers.

Ṭalḥah Ibn Muṭarrif was the best Qur'ān reciter in Kūfah. When he saw that many people have gathered around him, he began attending the gatherings of Al-Aʿmash. Hence people began to attend Al-Aʿmash's gatherings and left his.

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[175] Abū Dāwūd, #4063, Tirmidhī, #5224 and see Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Mālik Ibn Faḍala (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*)

By Allāh! This is red sulphur (i.e. very valuable material) and this is how dealing with Allāh should be. Anything else would be an act of worshiping people, and an act of deception. Most people have become like this ... not the *Salaf*.

I would sacrifice myself for the sake of a group of dears,
Who never knew fancy talk or dyeing eyebrows.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-FIVE

All Sins are Awful, but Some are More Awful than Others

All sins (*ma'āṣī*) are awful (*qabīḥa*), but some are more awful than others. Adultery (*ẓinā*) is the most awful of sins (*aqbaḥ al-dhunūb*) because it ruins marriages and distorts lineages. And it is even worse if committed against a female neighbour.

'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said: 'I asked Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ): 'Which sin is the greatest?' He replied: "To make any rival with Allāh when it is He who created you." I asked, 'Then what?' He said, "To kill your child for fear that he will eat with you." I asked, 'Then what?' He said: "To commit fornication with the wife of your neighbour"'[176]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "It is less serious for a man to fornicate with ten women than for him to fornicate with his neighbour's wife. And it is less serious for a man to steal from ten houses than for him to steal from his neighbour's house."[177]

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[176] Bukhārī, #4761 and Muslim, #86 on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

This is because such sins include a disobedience to Allāh and a violation to the rights of the neighbour, which are indeed great. And amongst the worst of sins is for an older man to commit fornication. Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "Allāh hates a fornicating old man."[178]

This is because for an old man, his sexual desires recede, so it needs to be provoked excessively in defiance to Allāh's order.

Among the sins that include an aspect of defiance to them is wearing silk and gold for men, especially for an older man to wear a gold ring. It is indeed one of the most obnoxious of actions and worst of sins.

Similarly, showing-off (*riyā'*) and pretending to have humility (*takhasha'*) to other people is like worshiping them, and involves ignoring Allāh's rights. The same applies to dealing in obvious usury by a wealthy person.

And among the worst of things is for an old man to be ill for a long time. Yet he does not make repentance or seek forgiveness from sins, and does not pay off debt he owes and does not ask his heirs to pay them off from the due rights on him.

Amongst the worse of sins is for a thief or an oppressor to stop doing evil without returning the money he has stolen to the victims. And for he who does not pay *zakat* and offer prayer, not to make up for them later.

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[177] *Musnad* Ahmad, #23342 and Bukhārī in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, #103. See *Sahih Targhib wa'l-Tarhib*, #2468. It is sahih.

[178] Tirmidhī, #2568, Nasā'ī, #2570, and Ibn Hibbān, #5558. See *Da'if al-Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhu*).

And among the worst of sins is for a man to divorce his wife but continue his relationship with her. Use what I have mentioned as a measure for other sins for sins are numerous and the worst of them is clear.

All of these sins involve defying Allāh, so he who falls into them deserves to be cursed and punished continuously.

I also believe drinking liquor to be of this type of sin, because liquor is not sought for itself, smell or taste.

It is sought for the pleasure that happens after the agony of drinking it. So going against one's desires for the sake of a later pleasure, is a form of defiance.

We ask Allāh for a strong belief that prevents us for disobeying Him, and we seek that He aids us in pleasing Him, for we are only by Him and for Him.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-SIX

Arrogance and its Danger for the Scholar

I have noticed that most scholars (*'ulamā'*) and ascetic (*zuhhād*) are seemingly arrogant (*kibr*).

They compare their statuses to one another (and have unscrupulous practises); some of them do not visit a sick person if he is sick because they consider themselves above that.

In fact, I have heard some of them saying, "I will only be buried in the same place as Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal!"

He knows that this will require removing the bones of other deceased people, but believe me do they deserve such a thing. Others say, "Bury me next to my Masjid" thinking that they will become graves frequented by others (*mazārs*), like Ma'rūf al-Karkhī.

Little do they realise that this is a destructive trait. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever believes that he is better than others is an arrogant person."[179]

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[179] Reported by Abū Nu'aym in *al-Ḥilyah*, 7/272 and this is a saying of Sufyān Ibn 'Uyainah.

Most of whom I have met are arrogant (*'ujb*). Why is that so?

If it is due to knowledge (*'ilm*) they have, then other scholars have surpassed them. And if it's due to performing a lot of worship, then other worshippers have surpassed them. And if it's due to money, then money does not present a religious virtue.

If he says, "I know that which others do not know" then we say: "The problem is not for you to realise that you know more than others, but it is for you to think you are better than other believers."

Being better is not a function of how much knowledge and worship one performs, rather, it is by the quality of knowledge and worship.

He who is aware of his bad traits and sins is not necessarily aware of the sins of the other people. So a person must beware of being fond of himself, and to assume that he will have a high status in the Hereafter.

In fact, a believer will always belittle himself. 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz (may Allāh have mercy upon him) was asked, 'After you die, should we bury you in the same room where Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) was buried?' He replied, 'I would rather that I meet Allāh after committing all sins except *shirk*, than to believe I am worthy of such a burial.'

An ascetic heard a voice in his dream saying, "So and so shoemaker is better than you!" So he went to him and asked him for the reason, he answered: "I have never met a Muslim, except I thought he was better than me."

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-SEVEN

The Importance of Waiting for an Angry Person to Calm Down

When your friend and acquaintances say deplorable things after getting angry (ghadab), you should not take what they say seriously, or to entirely blame them for it. They are similar to a drunkard who remains unaware of what they are saying.

Instead, wait for them to cool down for remember, the devil has overtaken him and that his nature has concealed their intellect (*'aql*).

If you become angry with anyone over what they say, or talk back to him while he is angry, then you would be just like an intelligent person facing a foolish person—or like an awaken person blaming someone who is unconscious. You would be the liable sinner.

Look at him with mercy (*raḥma*) and notice how destiny is manipulating him and how his nature is playing with him. Know that when he calms down, he will feel guilty for what happened and realise your virtue of patience (*faḍl al-ṣabr*) with him.

So it is best to leave an angry person to do whatever (temporarily) comforts him.

This is what a son should do with his angry father, and a wife with her angry husband. She should let him say what he wants and not take it seriously because he will return feeling guilty (*nādim*) and apologetic.

On the other hand, if she confronts him for what he says, then animosity (*ʿadāwa*) will become firmer and he will act after calming down based on how he was dealt with while angry.

Unfortunately, most people do not act this way.

If they see an angry person they confront him for his words and actions. This goes against the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) led behaviour that I have mentioned,

وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَآ إِلَّا ٱلْعَٰلِمُونَ

"And only the knowledgeable ones will comprehend it."
[*al-ʿAnkabūt* (29):43]

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-EIGHT

Do Not Trust the Friendliness of One Whom You Have Harmed

No one is more foolish than he who severely harms another person before apparently reconciling with one another, thinking that the harm done will go away because of this reconciliation. This is especially true about leaders and figures of authority because their main goal is to secure their position and for no one to surpass them. Once this happens it can never be remedied.

Look at the case of Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī. He belittled Al-Manṣūr before he became Khalīfah, after becoming the Khalīfah he killed him.

And he who reads history will find the same repeatedly occurring to many others.

He who humiliates a Sultān must try his best not to fall into his hands. Otherwise he will regret not being cautious enough. Similar to this is when colleagues harm one another—once they do, they should not wholly trust each other. They will always aim to harm each other and to con each other. Only accompany those whom you have been good to, for they only see your good side and will have good feelings towards you.

The same applies to your children, wife and others you deal with. In addition to this, you should never speak against someone or show animosity towards them.

It may be that one day you need them or they may become persons of authority and take revenge.

A wise man must plan for all possibilities and must conceal hatred (*bughd*) and love (*wadd*).

This is the advice that's on my mind and I hope it is acceptable.

CHAPTER ONE-HUNDRED-NINETY-NINE

A Wise Man Looks Far Ahead and Estimates Outcomes

He who does not investigate, study outcomes and does not prepare for what can happen is not a wise person.

This applies to all matters. Some people for example, are fooled by their youthfulness so they aggressively commit sins and postpone seeking repentance (*tawbah*). Death might take them suddenly before reaching their dreams.

Similarly, he who postpones seeking knowledge (*'ilm*) or acting upon it, and spends his time in procrastination (*taswīf*) will miss out on his objective.

Some people intend to do well and might designate their wealth as endowment (*waqf*), but they procrastinate and are overtaken suddenly.

A wise person tries to imagine what may take place diligently, and acts accordingly. If he lives long, he will not be harmed, and will be prepared should something bad take place.

You may speak to a leader about how bad a subordinate of his is, then times change, the subordinate takes charge and could take revenge.

You might act against your friend not knowing that a day might come when he becomes an authoritative figure and harms you back.

So a wise person looks at what might happen and never takes anyone as his enemy lightly. If there was a reason for animosity you should conceal it.

If Islām allows for you to take revenge then it is permissible to do so, yet forgiving is better for a happier life.

You might do a favour for a person who is seeking a job employment; later on he works and pays back the favour.

So use what I have said as a yardstick to measure all other affairs.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED

Forbidding from Accompanying Sultāns

If more a person's status is elevated in this world, the more his status will diminish in the Hereafter.

Ibn 'Umar (*radiyAllāhu 'anhuma*) said, 'By Allāh! Whenever one gains something in this life, then his status with Allāh diminishes, even if he is honourable in Allāh's eyes.'

A fortunate person (*sa'id*) is he who is content (*qana'a*) with little gain, for time is more valuable than to be wasted in seeking the world (*talab al-dunya*)—unless if the seeker fears Allāh in his gain, refrains from greed (*tam'*) and seeks to assist righteous people (*i'āna ahlul-khayr*) and give charity (*sadaqah*) to the poor. For someone like this, it is better for him to seek gain than not to do so.

As for the elevated status that results from mixing with Sultāns, it will certainly harm one's religion, and if it does not, then it jeopardises his ending.

We have seen many scholars who had a bad ending because of their proximity (*qurb*) and mixing (*makhālat*) with Sultāns. They went after comfort but did not achieve it properly, because sadness of the heart never goes away with money or food.

No one is more honourable and has a better life than a person who spends his time in seclusion (*khalwa*). He does not mix with the Sultān and does not care about how good his food is. It is usually a piece of bread and a cup of water. He is never told a word that harms him, and if he does have a need to visit the Sultān, neither religion nor people condemn him.

If we compare the difference between Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal's refraining from Sultāns, and Ibn Abī Du'ād and Yaḥyā Ibn Aktham, then we will learn the difference between a good life in this world and safety (*salāma*) in the Hereafter.

Ibn Adham said, 'If kings and their sons knew the pleasure (ladha) in which we are living [because of our religious contentment], they would have fought us over it.'

Ibn Adham spoke the truth. When a Sultān eats something he fears that someone might have poisoned it, and when he goes to sleep he fears that someone will assassinate him. He remains indoors fearing leaving his residence. If he does so he gets annoyed from the closest people to him.

If he likes a certain food he will eat too much from it and trouble his stomach; if he has too much sexual relations he becomes weak and feels little pleasure. He does not find the same joy that a poor person finds when eating after being hungry or a single man after finding a woman. A poor person might feel secure enough to sleep on the street, something that a prince would not be able to do. So their pleasure is always reduced, yet they will be held to account more.

By Allāh! I do not know of any people who lived honourably while achieving pleasures more than sincere scholars such as Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, and true worshipers (*ʿibād*) such as Maʿrūf.

The pleasure of knowledge (*ladha al-ʿilm*) exceeds all pleasures, and whenever seekers of knowledge feel hunger or harm, this only elevates their status. There is also a sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) to seclusion (*khalwa*) and worship (*taʿabbud*).

Maʿrūf for example, was alone with his Lord, living comfortably with Him and enjoying the sweetness of being with Him.

Although he died about four hundred years ago, he is still gifted (the reward) of reciting many chapters of the Qur'ān! The least that is done for him is people stand at his grave (*qabr*), reciting:

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ١

"Say: 'He is Allāh, [the] one and only.'"

[*al-Ikhlāṣ* (112):1][1]

And gift him its reward. Even Sultāns stand humble in front of his grave. On the day of resurrection more honours will be distributed.

The same applies to graves of scholars. Those who have been inflected with visiting leaders, they confessed that they were harmed by doing so.

Sufyān Ibn ʿUyaynah said, 'Since I accepted the gift of such and such prince, I was stripped from the understanding of the Qur'ān.'

And look at the grave of Abū Yūsuf al-Qāḍī, it is hardly visited by even few people.

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[1] May Allāh have mercy on Ibn Jawzi, it is not from the sunnah to recite the Qur'ān at the graveyard. However there are many other beneficial things that can be done to benefit the dead.

So refraining from mixing with leaders might cause hardship sometimes, yet it will result in goodness in many other ways. It is best for someone to be firm upon this issue.

Abū'l-Ḥasan Al-Qazwinī used to leave his house only for prayers at the *masjid.* The Sultaan used to sit waiting for him to greet him.

Dwelling too much on this subject might cause the listener (reader) to become bored. He who tastes what I am talking about would better understand.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-ONE

Most People Are Not on the Right Path

He who studies religion adequately, knows how the Messenger (ﷺ), his Companions and major scholars were upon. He will certainly realise that most people are not on the right path. They only follow customs [and cultures thinking they are religion].

They visit one another and indulge in backbiting. They seek each other's faults, envy one another, make fun of one another, behave arrogantly towards each other, trick each other for the sake of worldly gain and count faults.

All of this is committed by those who claim to be ascetic (*zāhid*), not laypeople.

It is best for those who know Allāh, the religion and the ways of the righteous predecessors, to refrain from mixing with all types of people.

And if he is forced to meet a person of knowledge, he should be careful of him and not converse too much. He should run away promptly to seek company with books that contain perfection.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWO

The Path to Perfection and Its Causes

Perfection (*kāmil*) is rare and dear.

The first cause for attaining perfection is for body parts to be proportional (i.e. outward appearance) and for the inside (i.e. the heart and soul) to be good.

An evidence for the perfection of body figure is good appearance (*khalq*) and having good manners (*khulq*). And the proof for the goodness (*ḥusn*) of one's inside is having good habits and manners (*akhlāq*). As for habits, they are; chastity (*ʿiffa*), honesty (*nazāha*) and refraining from ignorance (*jahl*) and greed (*sharḥ*).

Good manners include; generosity (*karm*), altruism (*īthār*), concealing faults (*sitr al- ʿuyūb*), presenting virtuous deeds first and forgiving the ignorant.

He who is granted these attributes will be elevated to the status of perfection, and he will demonstrate the most noble of characteristics. If any of these attributes are lacking, then he will equally be far from perfect.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THREE

Surrendering to Allāh's Order and Accepting His Decree

No one is more foolish than he who deals with Allāh based on worldly gain.

What would then be the wisdom behind afflictions?

Nay! There is no escaping from things not going the way we want, neither for answers to questions to seize, or for the enemies to be spiteful at times.

He who expects to always be safe (*salāma*) and victorious (*naṣr*) over his enemy, and to be free (*ʿāfiya*) from afflictions (*balāʾ*) is someone who does not understand duty, and does not comprehend the reality of surrender.

Was not the Messenger (ﷺ) victorious in the battle of Badr, but later went through what he went through in the battle of Uhud?

Was not he prevented from reaching the House, but then he was able to reach it?

Life must thus contain good and bad. Receiving good necessitates giving thanks (*shukr*) and receiving bad provokes begging (*sawāl*) and praying (*du'ā'*).

If the prayer is not answered then it is surrender that is required. This is where true belief (*īmān*) and the essence of men become apparent. If a person surrenders from the inside and outside, then this is perfection (in servitude to Allāh).

Yet, if a person feels pain inside because of the effect of Allāh's Divine Decree (*qaḍā'*) and not from the decree itself—a person surely feels pain from things that harm him—then this is indicative of a lack of knowledge.

Should a person begin to complain verbally, then this is how ignorant people behave.

And we seek refuge with Allāh from acting so.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FOUR

Necessity of Patience during Hardship

One of the greatest forms of affliction (*ibtilā'*) is for a person to be placed in a position where he does not fit.

For example, for a righteous person to have to accommodate an oppressor; to intermingle with those who are not fit; to enact things that are inappropriate or to enact things that prevent him from achieving what he hopes for.

A scholar might not be able to forbid a Sultān from doing something evil, so his effort is wasted in attending to such inconveniences. A scholar may sometimes need to perform things that are not befitting of him—such as having to trade at the market place or having to work for someone else.

Those who are ever-watchful of Allāh might not be able to do such things. He may be poor with a large family; he might lose a loved one or undergo a hardship regarding his body. His enemy might gain power over him, or he may see an oppressor oppressing him and the wrongdoer doing him wrong. All of these things make him feel bad and make his heart tremble.

The best thing to do in such cases of hardship is to surrender to the decrier. A stern believer is often seen holding up to such calamities. His heart does not change and his tongue does not speak of complaints.

Did not the Messenger (ﷺ) ask, "Who is willing to protect me? Who is willing to support me?"

And he needed to enter Makkah under the protection of a non-believer. Were not the intestines of a dead camel thrown on his back, and his companions murdered?

Did he not have to accommodate those whom he was hoping would embrace Islām?

And did He not feel hunger?

All of this happened while he was firm, and did not change. This was because he realised that this world is a place for Allāh to test people and to see how they will react. For the servant to realise the greatness of the reward, and that whatever he is going through is Allāh's Decree, will make it easy for the servant to be more accepting:

A wound will not hurt if it brings you Pleasure.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIVE

Many Scholars and Ascetic People are Slaves of Wealth

No one denies that loving wealth is from human nature because it is the cause that sustains our bodies. Yet some hearts love it more than others to the point that it becomes an objective in itself rather than a tool of achieving objectives (*maqāṣid*).

You may see a stingy person (*bakhīl*) depriving himself from pleasures (*ladhāt*), and all he cares about is collecting more money!

This is the nature of many people, especially the ignorant ones. A scholar must therefore, resist such eagerness to gather wealth and he must not take money from unlawful ways or doubtful means; nor attain it with great vigour and by humiliating oneself. He may not be eligible yet he might take from *ẓakat* money, put away as saving and not allowing others to benefit from it.

This would be the behaviour of an animal, not a human. An animal might change over time by taming it, yet these scholars are not tamed with the knowledge they gained.

Abū'l-Ḥasan Al-Busṭamī used to reside in a tent on River 'Īsā. He only wore wool and was respected. Yet, he left behind four thousand Dinārs.

Another Shaikh reached the age of eighty and had no family or children. He became sick so he resided with a friend who spent money on his food and medicine. He died later on and left behind large sums of money.

Ṣadaqah Ibn Al-Ḥusayn the scribe was always complaining about bad times and bad people. He used to stay alone in the Masjid and when he died, he left behind three hundred Dinārs.

Abū Ṭālib Ibn Al-Mu'ayyad Al-Ṣūfi used to collect money. Once an amount of one hundred Dinārs was stolen from him, so he felt very sad which contributed to his death.

You see some people asking others for money, so they receive a lot of money to the point of becoming rich, but they continue begging and taking from *ẓakat*. Similar to them are storytellers who travel all over the place asking for money. They receive the money but never stop begging for more.

Subḥān Allāh! What good did the knowledge (*'ilm*) they benefit them? Had they been ignorant (*jahl*) they would have been excused!

Among the worst of their deeds is that they do things that bring them more worldly gain, such as feigning humility and staying away from dealing with people.

All of these people are far from proper Sharī'ah. In fact, I have heard some of them backbiting by talking ill of their colleagues. Woe to them! How little do they enjoy these worldly gains?

He who diverts the hearts has diverted the hearts of people away from loving them. This is because Allāh only makes people love those who are sincere (*mukhlis*). In reality, the world has passed them and they gained nothing from it.

We ask Allāh that He grants us a mind able to properly manage our worldly affairs, and to win over our Afterlife.

Surely the Sustainer is all able.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIX

Knowing Allāh is the Most Precious Thing in This Life

He who understands the honour of existence (*sharf al-wujūd*), must attempt to gain the best from it.

Life is similar to a trading season, with all types and forms of trade. People commonly say, 'Go after whatever is light in weight but high in value. So an alert person must only seek the most precious.

The most precious thing in this world (*dunya*) is knowing Allāh (*ma'rifa*).

Some travellers (*sālikīn*) attain the goal of their journey, and others are keen on gaining profit. Others seek what pleases the loved ones, so they accept their pleasure as sufficient recompense. To them nothing can ever repay the honour of this (love) relationship.

And others affirm their weakness, but remain grateful that they are seeking this path.

Others still, have elevated themselves above all such affairs. They believe that the mere fact they have been guided (by Allāh in this direction) is more important than thinking about the (performance of) deeds themselves.

Those are the fewest in number, yet the highest in status.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVEN

Prepare for the Moment of Death

He who realises the nearness (*qurb*) of his departure from Makkah (after making *ḥajj* or *‘umrah*) will perform lots of *ṭawāf*. Especially if he feels that he will not return to it because of his old age or health.

Similarly, he who is getting closer to the shores of death because of old age must work faster and anticipate the attacker (i.e. death). The bow was tough during his youth, but the bow became soft during old age, so now the only choice is to wait for the enemies who are trying to harm him.

How can anyone enjoy life while knowing that the good days he lives only bring him closer to his demise, and with increase in his life is a decrease in the possibility of him living longer?

Let him think about the following issue, it is more important than what I have said: Did not the Prophet (ﷺ) say: "Each one of you will be presented his place in heaven or hell, and will be told: 'This will be your place after Allāh resurrects you.'"[180]

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[180] Bukhārī, #1379, and Muslim, #2866.

So how sad is a person who is threatened with murder, continuously feels he is being killed before actually being killed!

And let he who has reached the age of seventy know that his breath is an expression of pain!

May Allāh make death easy.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHT

The Prophet (ﷺ) is the Master of Creation and the Leader of Messengers

He who wishes to realise the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of being pleased (*riḍā*) with Allāh's actions, and to know from where this pleasure comes, should contemplate the affairs of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ).

When the Messenger's knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of Allāh became perfect, he realised that the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) is the Owner (*al-Mālik*), and that the Owner has the right to do whatever He wishes with things He owns. He also realised that Allāh is All Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) and does nothing in vain, so the Messenger surrendered to Him. This was how wonders occurred to him for he never changed, and never expressed disgruntlement. He never said, "Had it not been like this!"

Instead, he stood in the face of destiny as a mountain stands in the face of wind. The Master (*sayyid*) of all Messengers (ﷺ) was sent alone, while disbelief (*kufr*) had spread all over. He (ﷺ) ran from one place to another, hiding in the house of Al-Khayzaran, and got hurt causing his ankles to bleed. They threw the intestines of a camel on his back, yet he (ﷺ) remained quiet and calm. Every season, he used to call: "Who would support me? Who would protect me?" Then he left Makkah and was not able to return to it except under the protection of a non-Muslim.

Had it been another person, he would have said: “O Lord! You are the Owner of all creatures, and Most Able to bring victory, so why am I being oppressed?”

On the day of Hudaybiyah, ‘Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu*) said, “Are not we on the right path? Then why should we accept this humiliation regards to our religion.” The Messenger (ﷺ) responded, “I am Allāh’s servant, and He will never let me down.”[181]

So his (ﷺ) saying, “I am Allāh’s servant” is a confession that Allāh is the Owner, and that He has the right to do whatever He wants with him. And his (ﷺ) saying, “He will never let me down” is a confession that Allāh is Wise, and He does nothing in vain.

The Messenger (ﷺ) was tested with hunger to the point of wrapping stones on his belly, while Allāh owns the treasures of the heavens and earth.

His Companions were killed, his face was cut, teeth were broken, his uncle was killed and maimed—all while he was quiet.

He was given a son, who later died. So he (ﷺ) took condolence with having Al-Ḥasan and Al-Ḥusayn (as his grandchildren) while later being told what will happen with the two of them.

He became attached to ‘Ā’ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhā*) but later he was disheartened when receiving the news about those accusing her of committing adultery.

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[181] Bukhārī, #2182 and Muslim, #1785.

He used to perform miracles (*mu'jizāt*), but so did (his enemies such as) Musaylamah, Al-'Ansī and Ibn Sayyād.

He attempted to establish the criterion of trustworthiness (*amāna*) and truthfulness (*sidq*), but was called, 'Deciever and soothsayer!'

Whenever he used to become ill, he would feel the pain that two men would feel. But he continued to be calm and only spoke to teach patience (*sabr*) to others.

He died, and his soul was taken while wearing a course garment, and not having enough oil to light a lamp.

No previous Prophet withstood such a level of hardship, and had Angels been afflicted with it, they would not have been able to withstand it.

Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) was allowed to eat from *Jannah*, except for one tree. He ate from it. Yet our Prophet used to say about permissible things: "What do I have to do with the world?"

And Nūh (*'alayhi as-salām*) became angry from what he had seen and yelled from despair:

رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ مِنَ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ دَيَّارًا ﴿٢٦﴾

"My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on the earth."
[*Nūh* (71): 26]

On the other hand, our Prophet (ﷺ) used to say, "O Lord! Guide my people for they know not."[182]

Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) said after his people worshiped the calf:

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[182] Bukhārī, #6929 and Muslim, #1792.

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ

"It is only Your Trial."

[*al-A'rāf* (7):155],

and he (unknowingly) punched the Angel of death in the eye.[183]

'Īsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) said: "If You were to repel death away from anyone, let that one be me."

Our Prophet (ﷺ) was given the choice to live or to pass, and he chose being with the Heavenly Companion.

Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) said:

وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا

"Grant me a kingdom."

[*Ṣad* (38):35]

While our Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Lord! Make the sustenance of the family of Muḥammad just enough to survive."[184]

By Allāh! These are the actions of a person who understood existence and Him who brought it about.

All of his desires died away and all of his objections faded away, so his desires became consistent with what was actually occurring to him.

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[183] Bukhārī, #3407 and Muslim, #2372.

[184] Bukhārī, #6460 and Muslim, #1055.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINE

No Woman is Faultless, so be Content with what Allāh has Given You

Women are the strongest in having physical desires (*shahwāt*). A man might see a woman fully clothed but still think she is prettier than his own wife.

He only thinks about the good parts of a woman, but after he gets married to her, or takes her as a concubine, he continues to ponder upon her faults (*'ayūb*). He never used to think about those faults in the past, so afterwards becomes bored with this woman, and seeks something different.

Little does he realise that getting a second wife might entail many hardships such as the second wife lacking religion (*dīn*), sound intellect (*'aql*), good management (*tadrīb*), or love (*maḥabbah*). So he misses out on more things than what he gains.

This is why fornicators commit this crime. They interact with a woman while all of her faults are hidden, and all of her beauties are apparent. They enjoy her for that moment, then move on to another one. So a wise man must realise that he can never get everything that he aims for:

وَلَسْتُم بِـَٔاخِذِيهِ إِلَّآ أَن تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ

> "You would not accept it save if you close your eyes and tolerate therein."
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):267]

In fact, the women of this world were not condemned by anything more that the verse:

وَلَهُمْ فِيهَآ أَزْوَٰجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ

> "They will have pure women therein (Paradise)."
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):25]

A proud person stays away from the sight of dirt, and the idea of bad manners (*'ayb al-khalq*).

So he must be content with what resides inside in terms of religious values, and adequate from the outside—this way he will live with inner contentment (*qanā'a*) and a sound heart (*tayyib al-qalb*).

Seeking more will cause his heart to become further occupied, and his religiosity less powerful.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TEN

Glory to Him Who Creates What He Wishes and Chooses

Glory be to Him who has occupied each person with a different form of art.

He made this person love the sciences of the Qur'ān, and instilled in the other person love of ḥadīth, and a third person language and grammar. Had it not been for this, the sciences would not have been preserved.

He inspired one person to be a baker, the other to be a grinder, another to bring plants from the desert, and another to treat skin conditions.

This is so people's affairs become sustained. Had He inspired most people to be bakers, then they would have made too much bread, resulting in mould and wastage.

He inspired different people to work on different things, so the affairs of this life and the Hereafter become well organised.

It is rare that Allāh inspires one person to perfection, seeking that which is best and acquiring more than one specialty or more than one science.

People vary in their specialties, so glory be to Him who Creates whatever He wishes and selects.

We seek His forgiveness if He is not pleased, and we seek His safety if we were not good enough to perform an interaction appropriately.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-ELEVEN

The Qur'ān and Sunnah are the basis of the Religion (*dīn*)

Science of ḥadīth (*ʿilm al-ḥadīth*) is *Sharīʿah*, because it clarifies the Qur'ān, it elucidates that which is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*). It also reveals the biography (*sīrah*) of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*).

People introduced falsehood (*kadhib*) and bad statements (*munqulāt*) into it, therefore a preacher must only mention traditions that they know are authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Otherwise ascetic people (*ẓāhid*) will act upon any ḥadīth they hear, and the preacher will narrate all that he hears—causing them to go astray unknowingly.

In fact, most ḥadīth discussing asceticism (*ẓuhd*) are not authentic. As an example, there is the well-known ḥadīth: "Any Muslim who suppresses his desire will be forgiven by Allāh."[185] This is a fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) narration that will cause a person to shun and not to enjoy what Allāh has made lawful for him, particularly lawful things that assist in performing righteous deeds.

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[185] Reported by Ibn Jawzī in his *al-Mudūʿāt*, 3/138 and he said it is fabricated.

Another fabricated narration is: That the Prophet (ﷺ) was given a container that had two types of food. So he said: "Two types of food in one container? I do not need this. I fear that Allāh will ask me about excessive indulgence in the world (*dunya*)."[186]

It was authentically reported that Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) ate watermelon with dates.[187]

Such types of unauthentic narrations are many! They based their actions on falsehood (*fasād*), so both the preacher and the listener went astray.

Some ascetic (*mutazahidūn*) used to act upon unauthentic narrations, wasting their time in performing unlawful things, while criticising scholars for indulging in lawful things. They believed that depravation is a part of religion!

Preachers mention unlawful things about Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*radiy-Allāhu 'anhum*). So they introduced into religion what could not have been a part of it.

Glory be to Him who has preserved this *Sharī'ah* by good people who repelled the fabrication of fabricators.

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[186] Tabarānī in *al-Awsat*, 5/140, see *Da'īf al-Tarqīb al-Tarhīb*, #1910, it is very weak.

[187] Abū Dāwūd, #3836 and Tirmidhī, #1843, see *Sahīh Abū Dāwūd* on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*radiy-Allāhu 'anha*). It is hasan.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWELVE

The *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad

Some students of ḥadīth asked me if anything in Musnad of Imām Aḥmad was unauthentic? I replied: 'Yes.'

Some Ḥanbalis did not accept my answer, but I ignored them because I assumed they were laymen, until I read a verdict (*fatwa*) issued by someone from Khurāsān, including Abū'l 'Alā' Al-Ḥamdhanī responding to this opinion and condemning those who adopt it!

I became surprised, and said to myself, 'Strange! Have scholars become laypeople? They only heard the ḥadīth but did not investigate its authenticity.' They assumed that I was condemning what was collected by Aḥmad, when this was not the case.

Imām Aḥmad narrated traditions that were authentic, sound and weak. In fact, he himself rejected some of what he had narrated and did not accept it nor adopt it as part of his *Madhhab.*

He said about the ḥadīth of making ablution (*wuḍu'*) with wine: "Unknown."

Whoever refers to the Book of Abū Bakr Al-Khallāl will find many ḥadīth narrated in the *Musnad*, yet were criticised by Imām Aḥmad.

Qaḍī Abū Ya'lā al-Farra' said, 'Aḥmad narrated popular ḥadīth in his *Musnad.* He did not intend to narrate just authentic ḥadīth or weak ones.'

His son 'Abdullāh asked him, 'What do you say about such and such ḥadīth?' He replied, 'All ḥadīth contradict it.' So 'Abdullāh replied, 'You have mentioned it in your *Musnad*?' Aḥmad replied, 'I intended to mention in my Musnad those ḥadīth that were popular (*mashūr*). Had I intended to only mention the authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīth then I would have only narrated a few ḥadīth. You know my methodology (*ṭarīq*) dear son; I never go against a weak ḥadīth unless there was another ḥadīth that goes against it.'

I am depressed because scholars have become like laypeople. This is because of their shortcomings in seeking knowledge. If they come across a fabricated (*mawḍū'*) ḥadīth, they say, 'It was narrated!'

Tears must be shed on how weak efforts have become.

There is no power except by Allāh, the All High, the All Great.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTEEN

Followers of Desires (*shahwāt*)

I heard that some early wrongdoers (*fisāq*) used to say, 'To me, life is nothing more than following one's desires, whether right or wrong.'

I pondered upon such a person and found him to be a soul (*nafs*) that is dead, having no vigour to protect his honour or fear from shame. He is not human.

A person may confront death so no one can say he is a coward. And he sometimes carries heavy weights so people say he did a good job. And he might conceal the fact that he is poor so no one looks down at him.

In fact when an ignorant person is told, 'You are ignorant', he becomes angry (*ghadab*).

And those casually committing sin would (ironically) kill their own sisters if they knew that their sisters were involved in something shameful.

He who has a soul never puts himself in a position of doubt, so people do not assume what is bad in him. On the other hand, he who does not care if seen drunk, and is not hurt by people mentioning him in an ill manner, he should be counted amongst cattle.

He who wants to follow his carnal desires and only worries about hardship (in committing the sin), and does not have any honour to protect, then he is an animal in the skin of a human.

How could a person live with the fact he was caught drinking, punished for it, and became known for this? Does not this horrible feeling equal (in shame to) the pleasure he sought initially?

And how would a lazy person feel when he sees his peers excelling in knowledge and business while he remains ignorant and poor? Will there be any pleasure in laziness and doing nothing?

And if an adulterer thought about what people will say about him, or if he contemplated the punishment, he would not commit the sin! He sees the quick pleasure like it is the shine of lightening, followed by long sorrow.

All of this is in this life. As for the afterlife, the punishment is everlasting,

وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا

"While those who believe are fearful of it."

[*al-Shūrā* (42):18]

We ask Allāh for pride sufficient enough not to commit sins, and a high vigour to seek righteous deeds. Indeed, He is near and answers prayers.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FOURTEEN

Caution from the Outcome of Sins

Punishment (*'aqūbāt*) might come quickly, and mercy might delay it.

A wise man hurries to repentance (*tawbah*) after committing a sin (*khati'a*). Many of those who were fooled by the delay of punishment were not delayed!

The quickest of sins (*ma'āṣī*) to receive punishment are those not associated with a lot of lust (*ladha*). It would be a form of defiance, and if it contained a form of objection against the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) then the punishment is unavoidable, especially if committed by someone who knows Allāh well. Such a person would rarely be ignored.

'Abdu'l-Majīd Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz said: 'There was a man in Khurāsān who was asked: 'How many days did it take you to write the entire Qur'ān?' He answered by raising three of his fingers and said:

وَمَا مَسَّنَا مِن لُّغُوبٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

"and nothing of fatigue touched Us."

[*Qaf* (50):38],

so his three fingers froze and became unusable.

A linguist attempted to compile verses like those of the Qur'ān. He climbed into a room in seclusion. Three days later they climbed up to find him dead and his hand frozen.

'Abdu'l-Majīd said: 'I know a man who used to have relations with his wife during her menses. He began to have menses himself. When he repented, his menses stopped.'

Similar to this is for someone to make fun of others. It is worse if he is being made fun of for something he had no control over, like saying, 'O blind person! O ugly person!'

Ibn Sirīn said: 'I once made fun of a person because of his poverty, so I became unable to pay off a debt.'

Punishment may be postponed to the end of one's life. A lot of hardship might occur because of sins committed during youth!

So beware of the outcome of sins (*dhunūb*). And hasten to erasing them by repentance (*inābah*). Sins have bad effects and if you do not hurry, they will harm you.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTEEN

The Honour of Wealth and the Importance of Moderation in Gathering and Spending it

Know that a human being was created for a great (*'aẓīm*) cause, and he is required to believe in his Lord with evidence (*dalīl*). It is not sufficient for him to imitate others (*taqlīd*) in believing. This requires dedicating effort in seeking the evidence.

Man is also required to establish obligatory duties (*iqāmah al-mufrūdāt*) and avoid sins (*ijtināb al-muḥārim*). And once his intention elevates to the level of wanting to seek knowledge (*talab al-'ilm*), he must then dedicate more effort in doing so.

The most fortunate of people is he who receives enough sustenance not to need people's charity, and he is content with it.

A person who does not have enough wealth will not be able to achieve the purpose of creation, because his effort will be directed entirely towards gathering wealth. He might resort to unlawful means in doing so, and he will spend his life in doing that which was not the purpose of his creation. Sometimes he might resort to humiliating himself.

A poet said:

All I need is enough sustenance to prevent me from humiliation,
So no one says: "It is so and so's favour on so and so."

So a wise person must preserve his wealth in order to focus on his efforts. He must not be wasteful so that his efforts do not become scattered. A person feels comfortable when he knows that his sustenance is available.

If a person does not have wealth, then he must gain enough to suffice him without becoming too excessive. He must accommodate his necessities and his efforts.

He must be content with little wealth. Once his intention becomes diverted towards excess wealth, then his efforts will become scattered. Not having wealth causes a person to become scattered, and seeking after excess wealth causes diversion as well. This will continue to the point when life itself becomes wasted for no other reason:

He who spends his days in preserving his wealth out of fear of poverty,
then what he has done was to fall into poverty itself.

So beware of this. If you do not put aside your children's sustenance, then they will scatter your heart. Your nature is that of a child as well, so never seek your nature's assistance.

Know the honour of wealth that made you focus your effort, and preserved your honour from people's attacks.

And never become too generous to the point of becoming the poor one who seeks others' assistance.

Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) noticed a poor person once and asked people to donate to him. Then another poor person came, so the first poor man gave the second from some of the donations that he had been given. The Prophet (ﷺ) gave back that wealth to the first man, and forbid him from doing so again.[188]

Contentment and not looking for excess wealth is the principle of all principles.

Imām Aḥmad prevented himself from accepting gifts, therefore he became more focused. Yet because Imām Ibn Al-Madīnī became covetous, his reputation became bad.

And who is it that will give you wealth? It will either be an oppressive Sultān, a bragging giver, or a friend who sees his favour upon you. Pride is sweeter than all sweet things, and it is best to be free from the chains of others conferring favours upon you, even if it means eating sand.

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[188] Abū Dāwūd, #1675, Tirmidhī, #511 and Nasā'ī, #2535.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTEEN

Modesty Will Prevent You from the Jealousy and Gloating of Others

It is part of human nature to want to excel over others of the same kind. A person therefore conceals any misfortune that strikes him in order not to be seen as deficient.

A person in need acts with pride in order for others not to see him with the eye of mercy. And a sick person acts healthy in order for healthy people not to pity or make fun of him.

When Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) saw his Companions suffering from fever upon entering Makkah, he said: "May Allāh have mercy upon he who demonstrates toughness."[189]

The Companions jogged while circumnutating the Kaʿbah (*rami*), this was so their enemy does not gloat

Nowadays the cause for *ramī* no longer exists, yet the ruling remains. When some people wanted to visit Muʿāwiyah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) during his final illness, he asked his family members to sit him up firmly, showing healthiness. After his visitors left he said:

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[189] Bukhārī, #4256 and Muslim, #1266.

With my perseverance I show my enemies that I do not crumble
by afflictions of Time,
When death shows its paws then I have found no omen to
work properly.

Wise men have always demonstrated toughness during times of hardship, poverty and affliction in order to prevent being stricken with the gloating of enemies, for it is harsher than every other affliction.

A wise poor person used to show that he is wealthy, and a sick person used to show that he is healthy.

Another point worth contemplating is that a person might brag about his wealth and become stricken with the evil eye. So his wealth will not compensate for this affliction.

An evil eye (*'ayn*) only afflicts when seeing something pleasant, and it is the trait of a person who is bad natured. So a person must demonstrate wellness just enough not to be stricken with the evil eye. [Prophet] Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) told his sons:

لَا تَدۡخُلُواْ مِنۢ بَابٖ وَٰحِدٖ وَٱدۡخُلُواْ مِنۡ أَبۡوَٰبٖ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٖۖ

> "Do not all enter from the same entrance, instead, enter from various entrances."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):67]

out of fear that they get stricken with the evil eye.

Let this be understood, for it aids the one who contemplates.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTEEN

The Hereafter will be Greater in Degrees and Greater in Preference

We were created in order to live with the Creator by knowing Him, conversing with Him and seeing Him in eternal existence.

This life is like a school in which we are taught to write with good manners in preparation for the next step up.

Some students are weak minded, they spend a lot of time at school and never learn writing or manners.

This is the example of one who does not know the purpose of his existence.

Other students add to their weak mindedness and lack of understanding, hurting other students, and stealing their food. So neither did they learn, nor did they refrain from harming others.

This is the example of evil and harmful people.

Other students learn how to write but have bad handwriting. They only learn enough to manage their needs. This is the example of a person who performs the obligatory duties, but misses out on complementary virtues.

Other students perfect writing, but do not learn mathematics. They memorise good manners but do not practice themselves. Such a person would be good to work as a scribe for the Sultān, because of his evil heart and lack of manners.

Other students seek the highest status. They are best among their peers, and take the teachers' place when absent. He elevates himself above them by his nascent pride and manners. His nature continues to push him towards excellence because he realises that the school is not the objective in and of itself, but it is only a means to gaining good manners, and a step toward complete manhood.

He is just like a fully developed believer who outruns his peers when they race, and shows off his good handwriting:

هَاؤُمُ اقْرَءُوا كِتَابِيَهْ ١٩

"Here, read my book"

[*al-Ḥaqqah* (69):19]

This life is similar to the above example. Some people are destroyed for being far from the truth, and they are the nonbelievers. Others err and have some belief—they will be punished but will end up in a good situation if Allāh wills.

Others are in a good state but are deficient, yet others are perfect when compared to those beneath them, but deficient when compared to those above them.

So people of comprehension! Know that this life is only a bridge to the eternal home, and it is a journey to the final destination, and nearness to the Sultān (i.e. Allāh). Therefore prepare for sitting with Him, talking to Him, and practice good manners in order to become suitable to be in His presence.

Do not let laziness occupy you from preparing your horses for the race. And be mindful of the Day of the race, for the more a person is cautious in this life, the closer to Allāh he will be in the Hereafter.

And their final destination will be according to their statuses. A person who is responsible for bringing fuel is not of the same status as he who is a guard. And a guard is not of the same status as a minister. Two gardens of gold, and two gardens of silver, and above them is the Firdaus. Those at the bottom levels of Paradise see those of the higher levels like they see small shinning planets.

A Seeker must comprehend the sweetness of surrendering to the Trustworthy, and must remember the praise he will earn when winning the race. And he must be careful of any deficiency or fault that will result in his bad mentioning. So let a person be mindful and stay far from desires, for the days are short. Poor believers enter Paradise five hundred years before wealthy ones.[190]

I encourage you to work hard, for the mountain has appeared, and the valley is showing, either by means of knowledge that guides to the right path, or by grey hair that is the sign of departure. It is departure that people of seriousness seek.

Al-Junayd was reciting while his soul was exiting his body. So he was asked: 'You are reciting at this time?' So he responded: 'I am hurrying before the the closing of my record of deeds.'

If [Allāh] wants you for something, He will prepare you for it.

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[190] *Musnad* Aḥmad 2/296, 451, 513 and 519 and Tirmidhī, #2353.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTEEN

The Contentment of the Dwellers of Paradise with their Status

I have contemplated an interesting thought. That the dwellers of Paradise realise they are deficient in comparison to those above them, so if they were to think about what they missed, they would feel regret. Yet this could never happen because they are (already) of good residence.

Paradise is not a place of sorrow and each person will be content with his status for two reasons:

First: He never assumes there is more bliss than what he is experiencing.

Second: That his status becomes beloved to him regardless, just as a parent loves his child even if the child is not that beautiful. He still considers him better than a pretty child who is not his own.

There is another nice meaning here, and it is that people have deficient intentions. Some memorise part of the Qur'ān but do not seek to memorise it in its entirety.

Others listen to some ḥadīth, others know some *fiqh*, others are content with the minimum of everything, while others only perform obligations, and yet others are content with praying only two *rakʿat* a night.

If their intentions were high, they would have been keen on acquiring all virtues, and elevated themselves beyond deficiencies. And so they will use their bodies to achieve this intention, as a poet said:

The problem of all bodies is being thin,
But problem of my body is my weak intention.

Some people stay up all night listening to music, but are unable to stay up listening to the Qur'ān. A person will be resurrected with his intention. He will be rewarded according to what his intention lead him to gain in this life. Just as a person's intention was content with the minimum status in this life, it will be content with a low status in the Hereafter.

People usually have sound intellect. They know that a person who prayed two *rakʿat* must not hope for the reward of one who prays one thousand *rakʿat.*

If someone says: 'How could someone not wish for things gained by those who are better than him?'

I say: 'If gaining it is not conceivable, then why feel sorry for not gaining it?

Have you ever seen a layman feeling sorry for missing out on attaining *fiqh*? Never.

And so if this were the case, then it would motivate him to seek fiqh. They do not have a strong intention for them to feel sorry. They are content with how they are.’

So understand what I have said, and hurry, this is the field of competition.

وَمَآ أَصَٰبَكُم مِّن مُّصِيبَةٖ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتۡ أَيۡدِيكُمۡ
وَيَعۡفُواْ عَن كَثِيرٖ ٣٠

> “And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much.”
> [*al-Shūrā* (42):30]

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETEEN

The Wisdom Behind Maintaining The People of the Book

I contemplated about why Jews and Christians are still among us and that we take tax (*jizyah*) from them. I found the wisdoms behind it to be amazing. One of them being that Islām gains strength from the *jizyah*; another being that Islām's strength became apparent by their submission.

However, I contemplated another interesting wisdom, which is that maintaining The People of the Book in our midst, and their practice of their religious rituals proves that there were previous Prophets and revealed religions, and that our Prophet (ﷺ) is not an innovated Messenger.

In fact, Jinns confessed the presence of a Creator and previous Messengers. This shows that we did not innovate what was not prior. They persevere on their falsehood, and continue to pay *jizyah*, so how could we not persevere upon the truth that we possess. Currently, we are in control, so keeping The People of the Book is a form of our respect of the partial truth that they possess. So let contemplators contemplate, and users use his intellect.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY

The Most Noble of Sciences and Some Advice to Students of Knowledge

There is proof for the nobility of gaining knowledge (*sharf al-'ilm*). Students however, differed on the most noble of sciences, with some of them claiming nobility of his specialty:

Some of them spent their entire lives on acquiring modes of reciting the Qur'ān (*qirā'āt*). This is a waste of time because a person must only go by the most famous of *qirā'āt*, not the irregular ones.

How bad it is for a Qur'ān reciter to be asked about a *fiqh* matter and not know the answer! He is too busy with acquiring *qirā'āt* from various directions.

Other students only busy themselves with grammar! And others still, with linguistics!

Others compile a lot of ḥadīth but never take the time to understand what they have documented.

Some of our teachers in ḥadīth used to be asked a question regarding prayer and not know what to say.

Similar was the case with some reciters, linguists and grammarians.

Abū Muḥammad Ibn Al-Khashāb was a master in linguistics and grammar. He was asked a question regarding raising hands in prayer and responded, 'It is a pillar of prayer.'

Everyone was surprised at his lack of *fiqh*.

A student ought to acquire a bit of each science, then he should focus on fiqh, and then focus on the objective of sciences, which is connecting with Allāh, knowing Him and loving him.

How foolish is the one who spends his life gaining knowledge of stars! He should only know a little bit regarding them; enough to tell the time. As for claiming to know judgment and ruling (by looking at stars), it is utter ignorance (*jahl*).

There is no way to know this for sure. In fact the ignorance of such claimers has been proven, even if some may coincidentally turn out to say what does occur.

Even worse are those who busy themselves in acquiring the science of chemistry (attempting to turn metals into gold). It is sheer delirium since it is impossible to turn gold into copper, and then the opposite is also impossible. Such a person is a deceiver of people.

A student of knowledge (*ṭālib al-ʿilm*) must purify his intention (*qaṣd*). Lack of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) prevents actions from being accepted.

He must also make effort to accompany scholars, contemplating different points of view and acquiring books because no book is free from benefit!

He must also focus on memorisation; once he becomes tired of memorisation he should then read.

He must be weary of accompanying people in power. He must follow the way of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions and their Companions. He must work hard on taming himself and acting upon his knowledge.

He who supports the Truth, the Truth will aid him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-ONE

Arrogance is the Essence of Disbelief

I have always wondered about arrogant people!

Especially from Arabs who are willing to fight and kill for a single word. Some of them were around when Islām came. They said, 'How could we prostrate causing our buttocks to be the highest points of our bodies?' Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) responded: "There is no good in a religion in which there is no prostration and bowing."[191]

With all of this arrogance that was in them, they used to worship what was beneath them, like stones and wood. Some even worshiped horses and cows. These people are worse than *Iblīs*, because *Iblīs* refused to prostrate to someone whom he believed was beneath him. He said:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ

"I am better than him."

[*Ṣad* (38):76]

Fir'awn was too arrogant to worship anything at all.

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[191] Abū Dāwūd, #3026—see *Da'īf Abū Dāwūd* on the authority of 'Uthmān Ibn Abī al-Āṣ (*radiyAllahu 'anhu*). It is weak.

So it is strange that such arrogant people used to humiliate themselves to a rock and a piece of wood! The one with a lower status should be the one humiliating himself to the one of a higher status.

This was pointed out when condemning idol worship (*dhamm al-asnām*). Allāh said:

أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ يَمْشُونَ بِهَآ أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَآ أَمْ
لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَآ

> "Have they feet wherewith they walk? Or have they hands wherewith they hold? Or have they eyes wherewith they see?"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7):195]

Meaning: You have these instruments of sense, and idols do not, so how could the better equipped worship the less equipped?

Yet, their desires and their insisting on following the ways of their ancestors concealed their intellects, so they were unable to see the facts behind things.

Other people were enveloped by envy (*ḥasd*) to the point of abandoning truth (*ḥaqq*) after knowing it.

Umayyah Ibn Abī al-Ṣalt admitted that Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) was true, and he went to meet him to accept Islām, but then he went back saying: 'I will never believe in a Messenger who is not from the tribe of Thaqīf.'

And Abū Jahl said: 'By Allāh, Muḥammad never said a lie, but if taking care of the Ka'bah was assigned to Banī Hāshim, and now Prophethood is also assigned to them, then what is there left for us?'

And Abū Ṭālib saw the miracles (*muʿjizāt*), but said, 'I know you are upon the truth (*ḥaqq*), if I were not worried that women of Quraysh would make fun of me for believing in you, I would have made you happy by believing in you.'

So we seek refuge with Allāh from the darkness of envy (*ẓulma ḥasd*), the oblivion caused by arrogance (*kibr*) and the foolishity caused by following desires (*hawā*) that conceal the intellect's light (*nūr al-ʿaql*).

We ask Him to inspire us with guidance (*rushd*), and to act upon the truth.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-TWO

The Conditions of Righteous People

We heard of some righteous (*sālihūn*) who had great kindness for Allāh and were gentle and loving for His sake. He in turn, also treated them likewise. This is because their nature does not withstand anything else.

Barkh the worshiper told Allāh while praying for rain, 'What is this that we have never known of You? Let the rain fall promptly', and so they received rain.

The Companion Anas Ibn Al-Nadr (*radiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) said: 'By Allāh Al-Rabīʿ's tooth will not be broken.' And this was what happened in fact. So the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Some of Allāh's servants if they swear that something will happen, Allāh will make it happen."[192]

Such people were gentle (*luft*) and lenient (*rifq*), so Allāh was gentle and lenient with them and rewarded them for being so.

Other people are of a higher status. Their prayer is never answered,

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[193] Reference already mentioned

and they are content with this depravation. They are too afraid to be relaxed and are chained with fear (*kawf*), and their heads are down with caution (*ḥadhar*). They do not see themselves worthy of being answered. All they seek is forgiveness (*'afū*).

When any of them is not answered for his prayer, he says, "You are not worthy!" or, "Perhaps it is better for my prayer not to be answered."

These are true men (*rijāl ḥaqq*). He is foolish who believes that his prayer is worthy to be answered, so when his prayer is not answered he becomes disgruntled. As if he is asking for payment for his job, and as if he is benefiting Allāh by worshiping him!

A true servant (*'abd ḥaqq*) is he who is content with what Allāh does to him. If his prayer is answered he sees this as a favour from Allāh. And if his prayer is not answered then he sees this as the Owner doing what He wishes with that He owns. So he never contemplates objection.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-THREE

Beneficial Knowledge Causes Belittlement of One's Self and Actions

I have seen some scholars (*'ulamā'*) behave in a liberal fashion, thinking that their knowledge (*'ilm*) would shield them. Little do they know that their knowledge will act as their enemy! An ignorant person (*jāhil*) is forgiven for committing seventy sins (*dhunūb*) before a scholar is forgiven for a single sin (*dhanb*).

This is because an ignorant person was never exposed to the truth, and a scholar did not behave appropriately with the knowledge he has.

I contemplated about this and found that true knowledge that is: knowing the truth (*ma'rifa al-ḥaqq*), looking into the ways of early righteous people, and attaining good manners; are not instilled in these people.

Instead, all they know is the terminology of what is lawful and unlawful. This is not beneficial knowledge.

True knowledge is understanding the fundamentals (*uṣūl*), knowing the One worthy of worship (*ma'rifa al-ma'būd*), His Greatness (*'aẓma*) and what that demands from us.

It's about looking into the way of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*), acquiring their manners and understanding what was reported from them. This is beneficial knowledge. It will make the greatest of scholars look down at himself as if he were the most ignorant of those ignorant.

I met one person who spent long periods of time in worship, then stopped. He said, 'I worshipped Him in a way that no one else has worshipped Him! Now I have become weak.'

I replied, 'I fear this statement might be enough reason to reject all of his worship, because he believes that he has done a lot. Instead, he should view himself like a beggar. He should not feel he is doing a favour to those giving him charity.'

The reason for this type of behaviour is ignorance (*jahl*).

Where are such people from senior scholars, like Silah Ibn Ashyam, whom leopards used to run away from? He used to say in his prayer: 'O Lord! Prevent from me the Hellfire, I am not worthy of asking for Paradise.'

And ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) used to say, 'I wish to come out on the Day of Judgment with nothing for me or against me.'

Sufyān said on his death bed said to Hammād Ibn Salma, 'Do you think someone like me will be saved from Hell?'

And Imām Aḥmad said on his death bed: 'No, not yet.'

I thank Allāh that I escaped from the ignorance of such so-called scholars, and those so-called ascetic people. I have looked into the greatness of the Creator and the ways of the great scholars to the point of quieting arrogance and repelling any glorification of a deed.

How could I think highly of my deeds when it was Allāh who enabled me to perform it? He made me see things that He did not let others see.

Did I perform these deeds out of my own goodness or because of His Greatness? And how could I thank Allāh for His enabling me to give thanks?

What scholar would not belittle himself when looking into the affairs of early scholars?

And what worshipper would hear about worshippers and not pretend to be one? Let alone truly becoming one.

We ask Allāh that He grants us knowledge necessary for us to know our true limits so that we are not fond of our actions.

We seek that He makes us aware of His Greatness so that our tongues never mention anything pointing to our deeds.

We ask Him to assist us to recognise the defects of our actions so that we gain enough shame from our actions that we are embarrassed of them.

He is indeed near, and answers prayers.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FOUR

A Good Life is Connected to Patience and Contentment

The reason for sadness in life is missing out on quick fortunes.

There is no continuous happiness in life, except for one who is occupied with the pleasure of his loved one, and being occupied in preparation to meet Him.

If he finds happiness in this life then he uses it to assist him in acquiring the Hereafter. And if he finds hardship, then he assumes patience (*sabr*) as a reward for the Hereafter.

He is content with all that happens to him. He believes this to be from whatever Allāh has destined and understands that it is His will.

A poet said:

> If me staying awake pleases you, then farewell to falling asleep.

He who seeks fortune will become frustrated if he did not achieve it. He becomes a different person if he becomes poor or humiliated.

This is because he is seeking his desire.

How eloquent was what Al-Ḥusrī said: "I owe myself nothing, and have nothing to do with myself!"

These are words of a learned person, because he contemplates the reality of ownership. A servant may not object to His master's orders, and his wish that things were different than they are is of no consequence.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَٰلَهُم
بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ ٱلْجَنَّةَ

> "Verily, Allāh has purchased of the believers their lives and their properties for (the price) that theirs shall be the Paradise."
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (9):111]

He looks at himself as owned by Allāh. A person, who sells a lamb to another, must not object if the buyer slaughters the lamb.

By Allāh! If the Owner says, 'I have only created you as a proof of my existence, then I will make you vanish and never resurrect you', then good souls must say: 'We listen and obey, what do we own of ourselves for us to say anything?'

The journey requires a lot of perseverance. Once the final destination seen from a distance however, all tiredness will disappear.

So beginners! Be patient, for the destination is seen. And those who truly know Allāh ought to be happy, because they will be greeted with glad-tidings.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FIVE

Allāh Preventing a Person from Certain Things Might be out of Love

I pondered upon Shaybān al-Rāʿī's saying to Sufyān: 'Consider O Sufyān, Allāh not giving you something, to be a form of granting you something. Verily Allāh did not prevent you out of miserliness (*bukhl*); He did so out of love for you.'

I found these words to be those of someone who realised the truth.

A person may wish for a beautiful woman but is unable to have one. Perhaps this is better for him. Perhaps if he got such a woman his heart will become scattered with preserving her, or with gaining wealth to sustain her. If he becomes too attached to her, then his life will become wasted, and his focus on the Hereafter will turn into caring for them. And if she decides to abandon him, then this would become a tragedy. And if she dies then he will feel extremely sad. So he who wishes for a beautiful woman is asking for a knife to slaughter himself without knowing so.

Similarly, having less sustenance is a bounty in itself. Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) used to say, "O Allāh! Make the sustenance of the family of Muḥammad the bare minimum (that suffices)."[193]

When sustenance becomes abundant then intentions will become scattered.

A wise person realises that this world is not meant for extravagance (*tan'im*), so he becomes content in all cases.

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[193] Reference already mentioned

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SIX

Open the Eye of Intellect (*‘ayn al-fikr*) to see the Light of Wisdom (*ḍū’ al-‘ibr*)

I found some people using destiny as an excuse. This is a cold excuse, and an attempt to repel obligations. It repels the religions of all Prophets and religions.

Messengers would not have accepted such an excuse from disbelievers not accepting Islām.

Although destiny is true (*ḥaqq*), using it as an excuse is false. Allāh’s assistance is the basis of all actions, yet it is subtle. So we must not occupy ourselves with subtle things and neglect performing obvious ones.

We respond to whoever uses destiny as an excuse by saying, “Allāh only obligated you to perform this duty after knowing well that you are able to perform it. You use this ability to acquire your desires, so why not use it to fulfil your obligations?”

For example: you are willing to travel for business, but not to perform ḥajj. You spend hours talking to a friend but you are not willing to spend time praying. So beware of using as an excuse something like this.

What can eliminate your laziness is for you to imagine the reward of hard workers that you have missed! This is enough of an admonition. As for him who has a feeble desire then:

> A dead person never feels pain from a wound.

How would you feel after being resurrected from your grave when you see some people rescued and not you? And righteous people are walking fast on the the bridge (*ṣirāṭ*), and you are tripping and falling?

The sweetness of laziness (*ḥalāwa al-baṭāla*) has gone away, and all that is left is the bitterness of sorrow (*marāra al-asaf*). Water in the cup has gone, and all that is left is the residue of guilt.

How long is this life compared to the Hereafter? And how long is your stay in this life when half of it is sleeping and the rest is oblivion?

How could you ask for the hand of a fair female (*al-ḥūr al-ʿīyn*) of Paradise when you do not own a penny of strong will?

Open the eye of intellect (*ʿayn al-fikr*) to see the light of wisdom (*ḍū' al-ʿibr*). If you feel an internal weakness, then seek the assistance of care-taking.

And attach yourself to the train of those seeking forgiveness, and arrive at the area of hard workers, and take your spot, any spot.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SEVEN

Abandoning Sunnah is the Source of All Innovations and Misguidance

I pondered upon Abū'l-Dardā's (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) words, 'I do not recognise anything of what is being practiced now, that was practiced [at the time of the Messenger (ﷺ)] except for (praying toward) the *Qiblah*.'

So I said, 'How strange! What if he were to see us today! All we have from *Sharīʿah* are apparent (*rasm*) things [not the reality of it].'

Sharīʿah is the pathway (*ṭarīq*). The Messenger's (ﷺ) *Sharīʿah* can only be known through his actions (*afʿāl*) and sayings (*aqwāl*).

The reason for for turning away (*inḥirāf*) from following the way of the Messenger (ﷺ) is either due to not being aware of it, causing a person to follow (blameworthy) habits (*ṭabʿ*) and customs (*ʿādāt*). The Companions saw and heard the Messenger (ﷺ) and would sway away from this path so little.

A person may know the truth but his desires may force him to sway from it. Narrations related to the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*radiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) continued to be abandoned, until they became totally ignored these days. People adopted habits that go against *Sharīʿah*, because they were easier to do.

In fact most people of knowledge have neglected *Sharīʿah*, so how about laypeople? And because of their negligence of authentic traditions, scholars innovated things in major and minor matters. For example, scholars of jurisprudence (*usūl*) became too occupied with speculative rhetric (*kalām*) which they took from philosophers (*falāsafa*) and scholars of logic (*muntiq*)!

Specialists in *fiqh* became involved as well, to the point of busying themselves with argumentation instead of the narration around which the ruling revolves.

Then storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) noticed that wealth comes through hypocrisy (*nifāq*), some of whom used asceticism (*zuhd*) to deceive people for the sake of worldly gain.

Others noticed that people enjoy songs, so they made use of singers to sing love poems, and abandoned ḥadīth. They did not forbid laypeople from committing usury (*riba*) and fornication (*zinnā*), or order them to perform the obligatory actions!

They sing about Layla and the crazed man, Al-Ṭūr, Mūsā, Abū Yazīd, Al-Ḥallāj and other useless nonsense.

Other ascetic people busied themselves with asceticism and seclusion, and stopped visiting the sick and mixing with others. They pretended to have humility and wrote books on self-control and eating less. *Sharīʿah* to them became the sayings of Abū Yazīd and Al-Shiblī and other Ṣūfis!

He who looked into *Sharīʿah* knows well that it contains none of those things.

As for those in power, they followed customs and considered killing and torturing people necessary politics. They did not adhere to *Sharīʿah.*

So where is the *Sharīʿah* of Muḥammad (ﷺ)?

And could it be recognised when people are refraining from Prophetic traditions?

We ask Allāh for assistance (*iʿāna*) in fulfilling *Sharīʿah* and repelling innovation (*bidʿah*).

Truly He is All Capable.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-EIGHT

Desires Never End

I used to hear 'Alī Ibn Al-Ḥusayn the preacher say while he was on top of the pulpit, "By Allāh! Yesterday I cried because of what myself has done."

I used to think to myself: 'What has this man done causing him to cry?'

This man was wealthy. He had Turkish maids and he had married several women secretly. He only eats the best chicken and sweets. He has a lot of money and a high status. He gained a good amount of knowledge (*'ilm*). He gave a lot to others and was very generous. So what was causing him to cry?

Upon contemplation, I realised that a person's desire (*ladha*) never stops at a limit. Once a person fulfils a desire, he begins seeking the next one. Life ends, the body weakens and deficiency occurs without all desires being fulfilled.

No one is more foolish than him who seeks to increase his worldly desires (*ladhat*). In fact, there is no joy in this life.

Joy (*sa'id*) is nothing more than being relieved from something painful. When a person finds a woman whom he loves and then came to know of her religiosity and good manners, this would ensure he keeps her to himself.

The biggest reason for him to continue loving her is that he does not look at another woman. If he does, then he will become unhappy and will interact less with her. He will become fond of the women he saw, and not with the women he initially loved. A poet said:

If a person keeps looking at the eyes of pretty women,
then he will be in danger.
He will please his eyes with that which hurts his heart,
no welcome to a joy that results in harm.

Then this man will stare at a third woman, so the second woman will become like the first, and so on. Instead, looking away from desirable and wonderful things will make life better. A beautiful woman may be wasteful or not loving to their husbands.

The most foolish of people is an old man seeking a young woman! He will not be able to fulfil her sexual need except through harming himself. He must not be deceived with his strong lust for women. I know an old man who bought a young concubine and died the day after he had relations with her.

And a young man stayed two months without having relations with his wife. Then when he finally did he died. Once a body loses its blood and semen it will die.

It is not adequate for a man who passed sixty years of age to have many women. Arabs used to believe that sexual relations ruin love.

A poet said:

Love is a kiss, a gesture with a hand and an arm,
This is what love is; once there are sexual relations then love is ruined.

Bishr was asked: 'Why Did not you marry?'
He replied: 'Why would I deceive a Muslim woman.'

Allāh said:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ ٱلَّذِى عَلَيْهِنَّ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِۚ

> "And they (women) have rights (over their husbands) similar (to those of their husbands) over them to what is reasonable."
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2):228]

He who dwells into something without looking into its consequences is foolish. So in brief, it is important to control one's sight (*ḥifẓ al-baṣr*). And for people to be content with what they have especially those who have become older.

Some of what I have said ought to be enough to repel a wise person from committing such faults.

We ask Allāh to assist us, and that He makes us act upon religion and sound intellect.

He is indeed close and answers prayers.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-TWENTY-NINE

A Wise Person Seeks Admonition from Others and Works for the Hereafter

The strangest of things is for people to be fooled by their current wellbeing (*salāma*), and to plan to (continually) improve in the future! There is no limit for such hope (*aml*). The more one enjoys well-being, the more hope one will have for the future.

What more of admonition is there than seeing the graves of friends and loved ones, and realising that you will become like them soon. It is far from intelligence for a person not to take admonition from this.

A wise person utilises times of wellbeing to save for times of hardship. He uses times when he is able for times of becoming unable, especially for those who know that status in the Hereafter is dependent on hard work during this life.

Even if a sinner is forgiven, will he gain the status of those who worked hard?

He who ponders about Paradise (*jannah*) in which there is no death (*mawt*), illness (*marad*), sleep (*nūm*) or depression (*ghamm*)—instead its joy (*ladha*) is continuous, and joy increases according to the amount of hard work during this life—such a person will take advantage of time and never sleep except when necessary.

And whoever ponders upon how the joy of sin (*dhanb*) disappears, while its disadvantage stays forever, then he ought to be repelled from committing sin. Especially from sins (*dhunūb*) that have continuous impact, such as adultery with a married woman, who becomes pregnant and the child does not inherit, and so on. All because of a moment's pleasure.

We ask Allāh to assist us and to inspire us with wisdom that prevents corruption (*fāsad*).

He is indeed near (*qarīb*) and answers prayers (*mujīb*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY

Confusions related to matters of belief (*ʿaqāʾid*)

I pondered upon confusions related to matters of belief (*ʿaqāʾid*) and found the source to be applied senses (*ḥis*), and comparisons (*qiyās*) made between the unseen to the seen.

Some people denied the Maker because they were unable to sense Him. They neglected that He was manifested through His Actions (*afʿāl*).

When a wise person passes through an empty desert and sees a building, he must conclude that someone must have built this building for it could not have built itself.

Then there were those who confirmed the Maker, but compared Him to themselves. Some of them said that "Allāh descends to the lowest heaven" means that He moved, because Arabs only know descent by movement.

Many people became misguided in matters of Allāh's Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) just as they were misguided regarding His Essence (*Dhāt*).

Some thought that He is affected by others; they said this because they learned of Him becoming angry and pleased, and they forgot that [all] His Attributes are eternal, and nothing of His Attributes are accidental.

Others were misguided regarding His Actions, so they resorted to the concept of *"ruling basis"*. They did so to the point of stripping Allāh's Actions of any wisdom. Allāh is elevated above this.

He who has been granted assistance (from Allāh) let him by mindful of what I say, "Know that Allāh's Essence is not like others', His Attributes are not like others', and His Actions must not be compared to those of creation."

As for His Essence (*Dhāt*), we only know essences that are bodies requiring to be assembled. This does not apply to Allāh because He is the Assembler! If we confirm Allāh's Essence to be ancient and not typical of what we know, then it must be known that His Attributes are linked to His Essence.

We must not compare anything related to Him to things which we do not comprehend. We must only believe and surrender.

His Actions (*Af'āl*) are similar as well. If a human does something that brings him no benefit, then this action would be considered foolish. Yet, He has created the creation not because it benefits Him, for benefit does not reach Him, and harm cannot affect Him.

If someone says, 'Allāh created people in order to benefit them.' We respond, 'This is not true because He created nonbelievers and will punish them.'

We see that He makes children and animals feel pain. He creates harm although He is able not to.

If someone says, ‘He rewards people for suffering from harm.’

We respond, ‘He is able to reward people without them going through harm and hardships.’

If a leader were to injure a person in order to reward him financially afterwards, he would be blamed for doing so, because he is able to give him wealth without injuring him.

And then we see what the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) went through hunger and some were murdered, while Allāh was able to protect them. And Allāh forbade the Messenger (ﷺ) to visit the grave of his mother. These are things of which we cannot comprehend the wisdom behind.

Allāh’s Actions should not be compared to our actions, and they are in no need to have any basis from them. We must surrender to His Wisdom (*ḥikmah*) that governs intellects (*ʿaql*), while intellects cannot govern His Wisdom.

Whoever compares His Actions to ours has committed a grievous mistake. The Muʿtazilites went astray because of this.

They said, ‘How could Allāh order something yet decree that it does not get done. If a person invites us to his home and then locks the door so we are unable to enter, this would be unacceptable.’

What they said was true in relation to that which is seen. But His Actions aught not be compared to what we see. We may never know the wisdom behind His Actions.

If someone says, ‘How can I lead my intellect toward what goes against it?’

We respond, ‘There is no contradiction, because intellect has clearly dictated that Allāh is Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*), and that He is the Owner (*al-Mālik*). The Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) will enact with wisdom, even if our intellects are unable to comprehend it.'

Do not you see how Al-Khidr made a hole in the boat, and killed someone. Then [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) condemned him for doing so based on what he saw and knew. Once Al-Khidr revealed the wisdom, [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) surrendered to it. And to Allāh is the best of examples.

So never compare His Actions to those of people, or His Attributes to those of people, and His Essence to those of people. If you understand this then you will be safe from drawing similitude (*tashbīh*) between Allāh and His creation; and you will also be safe from objections that led some to disbelief (*kufr*) by objecting to Allāh's Wisdom.

The first of such creatures was *Iblīs* who claimed that it is unwise to consider clay (*ṭīn*) to be of a higher status than fire (*nār*). He forgot that he had arrived at this conclusion by using the intellect granted to him by the Giver (*al-Wahhab*) who is more knowledgeable:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً

> "See they not that Allāh, Who created them was mightier in strength than them."
>
> [*al-Fuṣṣilāt* (41):15]

Ibn Al-Rumī objected to dwelling in the Hellfire (*al-nār*) for eternity by saying: 'Such would be an excessive revenge not acceptable by sound intellect. We must accept everything the sound intellect implies and not accept some and reject some. Such eternal punishment is not beneficial for Allāh or the nonbeliever (*kuffār*).'

I responded, 'This person claims that intellect exists when he has none!'

I would respond to his claims by saying, 'If you do not accept what the Qur'ān and Sunnah say, then this is the real problem and issue. There is no sense in discussing minor issues when there is a problem with major ones. And if you accept Qur'ān and Sunnah, then you must look for a weak excuse not to accept what they say.'

This person goes by what he sees, but we have demonstrated that Allāh is different than His creatures, and that His Attributes are different than theirs, and His Actions do not need basis for them.

As for wisdom behind having the disbelievers dwell in Hell forever; it is possible that the continuous punishment is in order to prove the accuracy of the threat. Allāh said, 'Whoever disbelieves in Me will dwell in Hell eternally, and there is no sin greater than disbelief, and no punishment is worse as being burnt constantly.'

Then He proves the accuracy of His threat by fulfilling it.

It is also plausible for the wisdom behind such punishment to be the additional reward for the believers, who are enemies of disbelievers:

وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

"and heal the breasts of a believing people."
[*al-Tawbah* (9):14]

Many people are very angry at what Abū Jahl did to 'Ammār [Ibn Yasar] (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) and Sumayyah [bint Khayāt] (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*), so his continued suffering would heal believers' hearts.

It is also plausible that the reason for the continued punishment is that those being punished increase in disbelief while being punished, and therefore, they are punished even more. The proof for their continued disbelief is the verse:

فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُۥ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ

> "They will swear to Him as they swear to you."
>
> [*al-Mujadillah* (58):18]

Meaning their disbelief remains and they will continue to be evil. This is why punishment continues,

وَلَوْ رُدُّوا۟ لَعَادُوا۟ لِمَا نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ

> "If they were returned (to the world), they would certainly revert to that which they were forbidden."
>
> [*al-Anʿam* (6):28]

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-ONE

Surrendering to Allāh

When a believer studies the previous chapter he must conclude not objecting to Allāh in any way, neither inwardly (*bāṭin*) or outwardly (*ẓāhir*). He must not look for the basis to Allāh's Actions.

Those involved with logics and deductive reasoning (*mutakallimīn*) rejected Sunnah and spoke of the soundness of their own reasoning, so they never gained satisfaction.

A proof for this is their disagreement and also the use of *qiyas*, but then confronted ḥadīth that caused them more confusion.

When a person asks Allāh for something and does not receive an answer, he must surrender and say, 'Perhaps not answering my prayer is better, perhaps this is because of my sins, and perhaps delaying the response is better.'

And if he is unable to think of a reason for delaying the response to his prayer, he must not conceal any displeasure or objection in his heart.

He should believe his prayer was a form of worship, so if Allāh answers his prayer then He has bestowed His bounty upon him. And if not, then the Owner does whatever He pleases.

Most prayers relate to matters of this world, the depravation of which is usually better!

Let a wise man busy himself with establishing the truth of the Truth (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*), and accepting His Decree. When you come to Him, He will come mending your affairs for you know He is generous, so seek His refuge and do not ask reckless questions. It is impossible for a maker to order you to do something and then not reward you for it.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-TWO

Paradise and its Levels

By Allāh! I contemplate entering Paradise (*jannah*) and staying therein forever, without illness, bad manners, sleep or any deficiency! Always being healthy, not having cause for stress, in an ever renewing bliss... I feel ecstasy, and my nature almost refuses to believe it, yet it is confirmed by *Sharīʿah*.

Acquiring such statuses depends on the level of hard work one puts in during his stay in this life, so I am surprised at those who waste time on earth. Instead say "*Subḥān-Allāh*" once and a palm tree will be planted for you in Paradise with eternal shade and fruit.

O you who is afraid from missing out on this! Encourage your heart with hope (*rajāʾ*).

And O you who is annoyed with the mention of death! Contemplate the moment after your soul exits your body, not before.

This way you will look forward to the new location. Your soul (*nafs*) will be in the belly of a bird flying upon the trees of Paradise (*asjār al-jannah*).

After thinking about the consequences, read the biographies of hard working people as you will learn many virtues and merits. Then Allāh will assist you, if He wills something for you, He will prepare you for it.

On the other hand, talking to those whose only preoccupation is with this life is one of the biggest reasons of intellectual illnesses.

Avoiding evil is beneficial and it is a cause for well-being (*'āfiya*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-THREE

No Rest for a Person except Through Knowing his Lord

I pondered upon the source of all distress (*hamm*), stress (*ghamm*) and found it to be one's objection to Allāh, and having a sole focus on this worldly life.

The more he misses out of a worldly gain, the more a person feels distressed.

As for one who's granted knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of Allāh, he will be at ease (*istirāh*) because he is sufficed through accepting Allāh's Decree (*riḍā bi'l-qaḍā'*). And if his prayers are not answered, he does not object because he knows that he is an owned servant whose intention is to serve the Creator (*al-Khāliq*).

Whoever is like this does not focus on gathering wealth, mixing with people or enjoying desires (*shahawāt*).

Neither does he have appropriate knowledge (*ma'rifa*) so he is content and attentive in worship. He gives up what does not last for the sake of that which is everlasting.

On the other hand, if he has (worldly) knowledge then he ignores everything for the sake of the Lord who owns everything. You see him perfecting good manners when alone (*khalwa*) with his Creator, and accepting His Decree. He loves Him and wants no one other than Him.

As for he who was not granted these things, he will continue to live in distress because he will never be able to attain all he seeks from this world. He will continue to feel sorry and miss out on heavenly rewards.

We ask Allāh to make us worthy of Him, for there is no power except through Him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FOUR

There is No Life but that of the Afterlife

I pondered upon myself and found it to be bankrupt of everything.

If I relied on my wife, she turns out not to be like what I had hoped; If she looks pretty, her manners would not be good, and if she had good manners, she would be occupied with her children, not at me. She might even be awaiting my departure.

Similarly, if I relied on my child, he is the same!

And so is the servant. If they gain no benefit from me, they would not want me! There is no good friend! And acquaintances who visit good people are not present!

I am left alone. Even my own self is rarely clear of disgust, and is rarely in a sound state! So all there is left is the Creator—If I rely on His Bounty, I am never safe from His testing. And if I hope for His Forgiveness, I am never safe from His Punishment.

O how my sorrow and O how my sadness!

There is no comfort and no stability! I am worried because of my worry! And I feel a burning from my burning!

By Allāh, life is only that which is in Paradise, where certainty (*yaqin*) is accomplished through contentment (*riḍā*), and partnership with those who do not betray or harm.

As for this world, it is not that good of a place.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FIVE

Caution is Necessary in All Matters

He who accompanies a Sultān must be consistent inwardly (*bāṭin*) and outwardly (*ẓahir*), because the Sultān might devise ways to reveal the true intentions of his companions.

Some Sultān's used to dedicate a room in their palaces for their companions, and test them. When they found that they did not have good intentions, they would order them out of their palaces.

Some leaders (*amirs*) used to camouflage themselves in community to find out what laypeople thought of them.

'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz noticed a man who used to pray a lot. So he sent another man to tell him, 'If I get you a certain government position what would you give me?'
The man responded, 'I would give you such and such.'
When 'Umar heard of this he said, 'You fooled us with your prayers.'

And I was told that a woman answered the invitation of a man to his house, and then killed him. So, one should not accept the words of a woman or a man who might be a spy.

He ought not to reveal something that should be concealed, such as money, gold, a school of thought one belongs to or condemnation of someone. And you must not trust baseless friendliness, because beneath it might be something harmful.

A person must be careful of every possible scenario. Someone might become harmed because of a word that was transmitted unintentionally. Someone might show you excessive friendliness until he takes control over you.

So be careful from trusting anyone, especially an enemy that you have previously harmed for he might use his friendliness as a net to capture you.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SIX

A Person Becomes Old yet His Greed (*ḥirs*) and hope (*aml*) becomes Younger

I noticed that the older a man gets the stronger his frugalness and hope becomes. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Son of Adam becomes old (and gains grey hair) but two attributes become younger: 'Greed (*ḥirs*) and hope (*aml*).'"[194]

I found the reason for this to be the increase in family and need. A person may need to resort to shameless acts to achieve his objectives.

So I said, 'O Lord! Is it possible for me to go astray after seeing mount 'Arafah?

Is it possible for the desert Arabs to take me after approaching the *ḥarām*?

What a shame for the life journey not to bare any fruits!'

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[194] Bukhārī, #6421 and Muslim, #1047—on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu*).

I used to seek you to gain my objectives,
but today I only seek your pleasure.

Then I said to my own self, 'You have no resort except to plead like a drowning person. If you do not receive mercy, then under the sand there is a lot of sorrow.'

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SEVEN

The Old Man and the Young Woman

An old man complained to me saying, ‘I have become old and weak, but am eager to get a young concubine. I know they want to have a lot of sexual intercourse that I will not be able to provide. And my housewife has become old and I am not satisfied with her.’

I said, ‘I have two responses:

The first is the general response: ‘You should busy yourself with remembering death, rather than worry about getting a concubine whom you will not be able to preserve. She will dislike you, and if you exert harder effort, you will hasten your own demise.

In addition to the fact that she will not want an old man anyway:

Muḥammad Al-Tamīmī said [in poetry]:

Wake up my heart from your love,
and listen to the words of someone who worries for you

You have become attached to a girl whose heart is attached to other than you, so you are attached to that which is not firm,

You have become chained, and she is free, what a difference between
someone who is chained and another who is free.

Know that she is counting the days for your death, and she seeks your money in preparation to connect with someone else.

She might resort to killing you, so be careful. Safety lies in abstinence and in contentment of what life brings to you.

The second response: 'At any given time, you are either able to have sexual relations or not. If you are unable, then it is best for you to refrain. You might be able to compensate her with money and good manners, but it is a risk.

And if you are able to do so sometimes, then marry a young woman, because they do not know much about sex. Shower them with money and good treatment, and prevent them from mixing with other women.

And try not to ejaculate until the woman reaches climax! And admonish her regarding the Hereafter, and mention stories of non-sexual nature. Remind her of the righteous people and apply good scent and clothes. Spend much on her so this will make the caravan continue the journey safely.'

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-EIGHT

A Wise Person Estimates the Outcome of Things and Protects Himself against Them

The most foolish of person is he who only focuses on the current status, and does not contemplate it changing, or expecting the unexpected that might occur.

A leader may, for example, be deceived by his leadership. When things begin to change, he finds himself in unfamiliarly bad situation. His miscalculations might lead him to make enemies because (he remains convinced) he has power and authority, but then things change and he feels guilty.

Similar is the case of one who is extravagant in spending money while relying on the wealth he owns. Some people eat, drink and have sexual relations out of trust in their health. They forget that this will result in illness later.

Among the strangest of situations is that he falls in love (*maḥabbah*) with a concubine, so he frees her, then marries her and showers her with lot of gifts. He then becomes powerful, and as time passes by he begins to love her less and seeks another woman. He finds no way out except to leave her and all the wealth she had taken from him.

One must not trust a woman or anyone's love absolutely. He might love a woman and think that he can never leave her, but then he begins to despise her. He then seeks another woman and contemplates leaving the first woman. Yet, it is not easy for him to do so.

So a wise person does not enter into something except that he develops an exit strategy. Things do not remain constant, and love does not last, and change is inevitable.

A person might grant money to his son, but then becomes dependent on his son. Thus the son begins to wish for the father's death, or he does not support him sufficiently.

A person is fooled by times of good health. He forgets the pathways of death, for it comes suddenly when there are no ways of escaping it. All that remains are feelings of guilt.

So a wise person always keeps his eye on the final result, is cautious of what could happen—preserves money and secrets, not trusting of a wife or son, or friend and is prepared to meet death, and ready to relocate (beyond this world).

This is the nature of people with discipline.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-THIRTY-NINE

Safety Lies in Surrender

One of the strangest things is attempting to seek knowing Allāh's Self (*Dhāt*), His Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) and Actions (*Af'āl*). This is most impossible except in generality.

The people of rhetoric (*mutakallimūn*) dwelled too much into this issue and achieved nothing except headache, causing the wise among them to return to surrender.

Likewise, did people of opinion (*aṣḥāb al-ra'i*). They resorted to analogy (*qiyāṣ*) and found many things not to be according to what they had thought. They had no option but to surrender.

A jurist (*faqīh*) is he who tries to reason as much as he can, then when feels unable to reason anymore he surrenders. This is how servants are.

Whoever tries to find out: Why did Allāh do this? And what does this mean? Then he is trying to realise the secret of the Master (*sirr al-Mālik*), which is impossible for two reasons:

Firstly: Allāh has concealed many of His wisdom (*ḥikmah*) from people.

Secondly: Humans are unable to comprehend all of Allāh's wisdoms.

So what remains to an objector is to resort to disbelief,

فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى
ٱلسَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُۥ مَا يَغِيظُ ﴿١٥﴾

> "Let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and let him strangle himself. Then let him see whether his plan will remove that whereat he rages."
>
> [*al-Ḥajj* (22):15]

Meaning, He who does not accept My actions, then let him strangle himself. I only do that which I want.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY

Seclusion is Necessary

He who is granted knowledge (*'ilm*) and insight (*nadr*) in the ways of the *Salaf* will realise that this world is nothing but darkness (*ẓulma*), and that most people are not on the Straight Path, so mixing with them only brings harms and benefits not.

It is strange that some people support intermingling with others while knowing he who intermingles will assume some of the traits of his acquaintances.

One should thus only mix with those who are better than him in knowledge and action so he can gain benefit from him. As for mixing with lower people, it is harmful, except in cases of mixing with laypeople to teach them.

Mixing with laypeople in our time cruds the heart because they bring utter darkness. When a scholar is forced to mix with them he should be careful and he should only mix with them to admonish them, for most scholars are not on the proper path.

They seek superficial knowledge instead of acting upon knowledge.

Rarely do you see them discuss matters of the Hereafter. They occupy themselves with backbiting (*ghība*), worldly matters and overpowering other scholars. They have indescribable jealousy (hasd) towards fellow scholars.

As for mixing with leaders, it causes corruption in religion. If a person were to be appointed in a worldly position then it is likely to involve oppression as they are usually distant from Islām. If the position is a religious one, such as judgeship, then he will be ordered to make wrong rulings. Most people fear for their positions, so they will do as ordered even if it is unlawful.

I have seen some people paying money to become judges or witnesses only to gain status.

As for those who pretend to be ascetic (*mutazahūd*), most of them are not on the right path, and are not consistent with sound knowledge. They made up their religion; they do not come out in public nor visit the market place. They show excessive humility (*khushū'*), but it is all hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

Some of them wear wool underneath their clothing and weave their sleeves in order for the wool to be seen.

An ascetic man was asked: 'When did you enter 'Irāq?'
He replied: 'I entered it twenty years ago, and have been fasting for the past thirty years.'
So people commented: 'We asked you one question, but you gave us two answers.'

Ṣūfīs build tents outside *masjids*, near to bad shops where lazy people hangout. They ask for charity and befriend oppressors. Many of them do not pray *nafila* or night prayers and only care about eating, drinking and dancing.

They practice things that are not from the Sunnah. They wear patched clothing for example, not out of poverty but to only demonstrate asceticism through wearing this type of clothing. So their clothes yell, 'we are ascetic people.'

Yet, the rest of their actions expose them! Food is always circulating, and sweets, perfume, relaxation and arrogance are always abundant because of this clothing.

The Prophet (ﷺ) told Mālik Ibn Faḍilah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) when he saw him in a bad physical condition: "Don't you have any money?" He replied: 'I do, Allāh has given me from all types of wealth.' He (ﷺ) said: "When Allāh bestows bounties on His servant, He likes to see the bounty to be seen on the servant."[195]

Ṣūfīs also repel people away from seeking knowledge (*'ilm*). They claim that there is no need for intermediaries. All there is, is one's heart and a Lord. I have mentioned some of their bad sayings and actions in my book *Talbīs Iblīs.*[196]

Had 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) been present today he would have needed a hundred sticks. In fact he might have used a sword against those Kharijites (*Khawārij*). Scholars' opinions of them are not well taken within the town.

So he who is blessed by Allāh to look into the ways of the *Salaf*, and was blessed by following their example, he prefers to abandon most people and avoid mixing with them because whoever intermingles will be harmed, and whoever acts politely may still fall into deception. Today, the advice (*nuṣḥ*) is not well taken.

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[195] *Musnad* Aḥmad 3/473, Abū Dāwūd, #4063 and Tirmidhī, #2006.

[196] Complete translation of the Classical Text is available in English, '*The Devil's Deceptions*' published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK. 1st ed., 2014.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-ONE

Do not Instigate a Quarrel

It is a form of idiocy to instigate quarrels or disputes with an enemy (*'adu*) of yours or a person whom you know envies you.

Rather, you should demonstrate to such a person a manner that safeguards you from his harm and evil; if he apologises, you should accept his apology, and if he starts a dispute, you should forgive and assure him that it is a simple matter.

All the while, you should be a man of caution (*ḥadhr*) without showing him what may indicate so. Hence you should never trust him and if you ever desire to cause him any harm then rectify your affairs, endeavour to fix your shortcomings that he is aware of, because that could be the means whereby he shall cause you a great damage and harm.

The greatest of all punishments that you can impose on him is to forgive him sincerely for the sake of Allāh. Hence, when his words against you are offensive and profane, let your forgiveness be extravagant because the common shall curse him on your behalf for the ill-manners he demonstrates while scholars shall commend you for such forbearance (*hilm*).

The harm you shall let him suffer through such means shall bring forth resentment outwardly (*ẓāhir*), and double of that inwardly (*bāṭin*), which altogether will be better than hurting him with a word of abuse that in return you will hear multiples of such abuse from his side.

Manifesting hostility and feelings of dislike shall make him realise that you are an enemy of his, and so he shall become more cautious with you and only speak well in your presence [hiding what he really feels toward you].

Forgiving him shall conceal what you have in your heart and so you can take your revenge [in the aforementioned prescribed manner] because harming him by a word or an action that may compromise your religion will make him the one who wins.

Indeed, he who wins through a sin (*ithm*) is never a winner! It is gracious forgiveness that brings forth winning.

Having this good mindset and demonstrated by good manners will be from a person who understands that experiencing such types of people is either due to a sin he committed or to elevate his rank by letting him endure such a trial since he, in such cases, overlooks his enemy as he only sees the Power [of Allāh manifesting in such trials].

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-TWO

Etiquettes of Supplication (*du'ā'*)

When you fall into a troublesome situation or a hardship you cannot seem to alleviate or resolve, supplicating to Allāh and turning to Him after repenting (*tawbah*) from your sins is your only solution.

Because a sin (*dhanb*) necessitates punishment (*'aqūba*), when a sin is erased with repentance, the punishment shall be removed accordingly.

If you complied with the aforementioned advice and despite your repentance (*tawbah*) and supplication (*du'ā'*), found none of your prayers were answered, you should investigate yourself further.

It is possible that your repentance was insincere; hence you should rectify it and supplicate again.

Beware also of letting boredom from supplications sneak into your heart because maybe in it was in your best interest for the answer of your prayers be postponed and not answered immediately.

It is therefore, in such a case, that you will be rewarded all the while waiting for your prayers to be (eventually) answered. It is in fact, in your best interest that you are not granted what you sought and be compensated with something different.

If *Shaytān* ever whispers to your heart saying, 'How long have you been supplicating but you still see no answer?'

Let your answer be, 'I worship Him with my supplications, while I am confident and certain that my supplications shall be answered. Yet, maybe the answer is postponed to bring forth a goodness that is for my interest for answers come when the time comes. And even if no answer is noted, it suffices the humility and worship I am in.'

Beware of asking [Allāh] of a matter without asking Him for the good therewith. Indeed, a matter you may ask regarding this worldly life may be the cause of your destruction.

If you are ordered in religion (*dīn*), to consult (*mashāwara*) your worldly affairs with a person informed of what you are capable to realise, it befits more to ask your Lord to write for you goodness in what you ask, since He knows all the best interests of His creation.

Seeking the guidance (*istikhāra*) of Allāh in your affairs is an evidence of good consulting (*ḥasan al-mashāwara*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-THREE

People are between Ignorance (*jahl*) and Knowledge (*ʿilm*)

When I observed people, I realised they are of two types; those ignorant [about religion] and the learned.

The former comprise of different categories of people, namely the rulers (*sultan*) who were raised in ignorance (*jahl*), which not only wore silk and drank alcohol but even their servants and workers are of their ilk. This type of ignorance is totally secluded from goodness.

The second category comprises the traders (*tujjar*) whose only concern is earning and collecting money. Most of them neither pay the obligatory alms (*zakat*) nor avoid usury (*riba*).

The third category is the shop owners who give less than due—and if they give by measure or by weight to them and they cause loss—they underestimate the value of people's merchandise when they intend to buy it. They are also involved in usury and spend their day and night in the market, thinking of nothing except what they are in. When night falls, they sleep like a drunk as their energy only manifests when eating or fulfilling a desire, and they cannot remember the last time they prayed and if they do pray, they either combine them or they pray in a rush speeding through it. This category is in the rank of animals and beasts.

The fourth category lives a low life whose profession is either rubbish remover or toilet cleaner or a similar profession. This is a category of the low-ranked people.

The fifth category is made of those who desire and seek worldly pleasures but cannot afford to fulfil their desires; hence they steal and rob people. The people of this category are the idiots as they have no life at all. If they happen to enjoy a bite of food or a sip of drink and suddenly the wind moves a branch of a tree they will flee the scene and escape fearing the police. Besides, they do not live long as their end is being either killed or crucified, not to mention the burden of sin in the Hereafter.

The sixth category is villagers who are wrapped with ignorance and most of them do not abstain from filthy objects; hence they become living like cattle.

Ignorant women are also different in categories; there are the beautiful ones who work as flesh traders; there are the wives who steal from their husbands; and there are those who do not pray and know nothing about religion. This type will be the fuel of the fire. If they hear religious advice or a reminder, it will pass over their heart as water passes over a rock, and if Qur'ān is recited it leaves no effect on them.

As for the novice scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and students of knowledge (*ṭulāb al-ʿilm*) who hold an evil intention (*niyya khabitha*) as they seek knowledge (*ʿilm*) to show off and not to act upon it. They often commit sins in public or commit avoidable sins (*fisq*) because they presume that their knowledge shall safeguard them, when in fact, such knowledge shall be used as an evidence against them.

Most of intermediate and well-known people of knowledge happen to frequently visit the rulers and abstain from condemning a wrongdoing.

Only a few scholars have a good intention (*ḥasan niyya*) and sound purpose (*ḥusn al-qaṣd*) because if Allāh wants good in someone, He makes him seek knowledge for the sound rightful purposes; to benefit others and benefit him and worry not about showing off his knowledge. Hence, he keeps himself far from the people whose concern is this worldly life and is careful while dealing with the common laypeople.

He is content with the little he has as he fears the danger of having too much of this worldly life, preferring solitude (*ʿuzla*) as there is nothing like it to remind him of the Hereafter.

There is nothing more harmful to the people of knowledge than socialising and visiting with rulers and people of authority because such people beautify the worldly life in the eyes of people of knowledge and trivialise the seriousness of wrongdoings.

In fact, if he wanted to object or condemn a wrongdoing he may not be able to. And if he is no longer content and starts seeking from this world what is beyond his needs, he shall not be saved from the harm of this worldly life as he is exposed to those who indulge in such worldly affairs.

A man walks in the marketplace for an hour and that is enough to make him forget what he knows from the amazement of what he sees there. So, how do you think the case will be if he combined all that with his frequent visits to the wealthy and having interest in possessing some of their wealth?

Solitude is the means whereby the heart returns [to its original state]. Then one can focus on the Hereafter, become able to consider the consequences, be prepared to depart [this life] and collect the provision for this journey. If contentment (*qanāʿa*) was combined with all that, he will ensure himself the goodness.

Today, a scholar can only accompany a book relaying the gems of the righteous predecessors (*salaf al-ṣāliḥīn*) because sitting with scholars today has become risky. Rarely is the topic of the Hereafter ever mentioned in most of their gatherings and assemblies.

For a scholar to sit with laypeople will compromise his religiosity unless he is cautious, ensures none of them speak in his presence, that he is the only one to speak and advise, and leant a listening ear. After concluding he rushes to leave.

It cannot be possible however, for a scholar to seclude himself wholly unless he is able to rid himself of his desires and interest in this world. Which cannot be except with ensuring a source of income sufficing him from needing others—be it a little that you feel content with or a trade you have or a property that generates you some income.

Whenever he is in need he will no longer be focused on his Hereafter, so the only beneficial thing for the scholar is to detach himself from people and lose interest in them while dedicating his time to remembering the Hereafter

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-FOUR

Dowry of Paradise

You ought to contemplate (*fikr*) using acute insight, the mortality of the dwellers of Paradise (*jannah*) who enjoy a distress-free life while basking in continuous pleasures, having every desire fulfilled and more than beyond belief, for indeed it has therein what no eyes have ever seen, what no ears have ever heard of and what no imagination of mankind could ever comprehend. All of this being unchangeable and unstoppable because time has no effect in Paradise as it is an infinity with no end.

To attain the benefit of such contemplation however, one should compare all that with his own lifetime.

In best of cases, a person may live to one-hundred years; the first fifteen years of which are spent recklessly as a teenager while the last thirty years of which are spent in a state of weakness and impairment.

For the life between these two phases, half of it is spent sleeping and part of the rest in eating, drinking and working, while only a small portion of time is dedicated to worship.

Having considered all this, should you not buy all that mortality with spending little in this life? In fact, he who overlooks such a deal indicates a severe mental problem and a defect in one's belief in the promises made by Allāh for His believing slaves.

It is He who has the knowledge to conduct such deals directing people to the path and educating people of its goodness and warning them from the consequences of being astray.

Shayṭān has manipulated some ascetics (*mutazahid*) and introduced grave trials in their way, the greatest of which being that he kept them away from knowledge (*'ilm*). This is because he wanted to turn off the light so he can steal in the dark. In fact, some great scholars deviated in taking such a path that knowledge (i.e. religion) forbids.

I saw one of the books of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṭūsī wherein he mentioned some of his reports, he said: 'I sought the advice of a notable man from the Ṣūfis, to ask his opinion regarding my intention to be constant in reciting the Qur'ān. He forbade me from starting such act of worship and said, 'the way to follow is that you need to disconnect yourself from this worldly life totally so that your heart neither thinks of a child or a wife or a wealth of knowledge. You remain in such a state until the existence of the existence of the aforesaid equals their nonexistence. Then you need to seclude yourself in a corner and sit there not thinking of anything at all while you keep saying in repetition, Allāh, Allāh, Allāh until you reach a state where, if your tongue stops uttering this word, you feel as if the word is still uttered by your tongue. Then you sit and wait for what will be inspired to you similar to what Allāh inspired Prophets and Awliyā'.'

I am not surprised with what he advised him to do, but I am surprised of his objection to read the Qur'ān despite his knowledge and understanding.

How could reciting the Qur'ān be an obstacle upon the right path? And how could he think that Prophets were inspired just because of their self-discipline and struggle?

In fact, how can one trust what appears out of such ways? What is it that will be inspired? Would it be knowledge of the unseen or a revelation?

Indeed, all this is nothing but the manipulation of *Shaytān*. It is possible that what they imagine to be is either just mental delusions or from *Shaytān*.

That said, you should seek knowledge and read the stories of the righteous predecessors to verify if any of them ever did such things or commanded such things.

On the contrary, they busied themselves with the Qur'ān and seeking knowledge that guided them to rectify and purify their hearts and hidden affairs.

We ask Allāh, Most High, for knowledge that is beneficial to us and shield us from our enemies, for indeed He is the Most Capable.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-FIVE

Dealing with the Beloved

He who wishes to choose a beloved should know that they are chosen for two types; a woman due to the beauty of her image, or a friend due to the beauty of his character.

If you like a woman for her beauty, you should also think of her character before allowing your heart be attached to her. If you find her character as you like it to be—then the basis of such a decision should be on her religiosity as the Prophet (ﷺ) said to go for the one who's religious—unleash your heart and pursue her.

But, let your inclination towards her be moderate and balanced for it is a mistake to manifest all your love to your beloved, for that shall bring forth nothing but harm, humility, forsaking and the demand to spend much wealth on her. Even if she is in love with you, because such behaviour is generated by the wish to be spoiled and dominate the one she finds in need of her.

It is interesting to note that acting according to your emotions will enable her to treat you assuming your ultimate love. And since such a state does not last, you remain subdued and dominated due to which you cannot seem to escape such a situation. She may control you by knowing your secret or by taking most of your wealth.

The best story I heard supporting this is of what I was informed; there was a female servant belonging to one of the caliphates who was deeply and madly in love with him but she never showed him how she felt.

When she was asked about it, she answered: 'If I ever show him how I feel and then he starts to avoid me I will die!'

The same should be done while dealing with your children, i.e. do not show your child that you love him unconditionally as this will make you fall under his control and so he will take advantage of you by wasting all your wealth, becoming over spoiled and refusing to learn and be disciplined.

And the same applies to friends, if you ever choose a friend and informed him of your feelings, do not tell him everything but rather deal with him kindly and gradually as if you are looking after a tree—because if such a tree is good the fruits will be good too. And, do not forget to be cautious with him because people change over time.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-SIX

Suppressing Resentment

If you ever resent a person because of his harm, beware of showing such resentment. By doing so, you will make him act cautious with you and provoke him to argumentation, thus trying by all means to harm you.

You should instead be kind with him if you are able to, and treat him as well as possible, so that his enmity and hatred dissolves with his shyness from hating you. If you are unable to bear behaving in such a manner, then you should avoid him in the best manner possible, without showing any sign of resentment that may harm him.

And if you were to hear a bad word coming from him against you, let your answer be good and gentle for that will be the strongest weapon to stop him from abusing you any further.

The same is applicable to all everything else you fear to show; beware of showing it to others because you may utter a word that may insult or degrade the pride of a ruler or a person in authority that reaches him and causes you severe problems.

Such words may also reach a friend of yours and thus cause his enmity. It may put you at the mercy of the person who heard it from you, fearing that he may narrate it to someone else—so be resolved and well determined by hiding your feelings of love and hate.

You should also hide your age for if you are that old, they will treat you as if you are an aging person and if you are young they will belittle you. And you should also hide the value of your wealth because if it is much they will consider the amount you spend as a sign of your miserliness and if it's little they will avoid you.

Do not reveal what *Madhhab* you are upon either; because if you show it, one of your opponents may learn of it and hence declare you a heretic.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-SEVEN

Servicing Oppressors is Oppression

I wonder at a person who believes in Allāh, Most High, and His Punishment yet still serves a ruler (or any person in authority) despite his evident injustice and oppression!

I truly wonder at such a person as I cannot understand what he admires in those people!

If he serves an oppressor because of his interest in worldly matters, he should know that it is evident the oppressor wants to be made the head of any assembly he attends, acts arrogantly with those in his rank, and takes from others, unlawful money though he knows it's an unlawful source. He does not even mind accepting bribes.

However, the oppressor is eventually either deposed, or his possessions impounded. Such bitterness and change of condition shall wipe away all the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) he tasted while being in his position.

And, when he becomes poor due to losing all what he had, the tongues that used to praise him shall begin to criticise and condemn him. If he was saved from all of that, he will never be safe from being watched and having people being cautious of him for he is like a person in the middle of the sea, if he does not drown, his heart shall be in constant fear (*kawf*) of drowning.

If he serves them due to religious reasons, he should understand that such people do not allow him to act according to the teachings of religion but rather command him to leave what is obligatory and perform what is prohibited, which (ironically) causes his religion to be totally compromised.

And indeed the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-EIGHT

Dignity

I wonder at a person who despises humiliation! How can such a person not forebear eating hardened pieces of bread to avoid being under the (control and) mercy of the favours of the dirty. Does he not know that there are no more people of (genuine) generosity left?

And if he ever asks something from someone, that such person will be a miser who does not give away anything! And if he ever gives, he will enslave the one whom he helped for the rest of his lifetime!

Do you not know that the little he gives to you will eventually disappear, whereas the feeling of shame and self-guilt will remain with you as you allowed yourself to ask for help from a person who humiliates you for helping you as you will also have to glorify the giver forever.

Receiving such help will make you overlook the defects and wrong-doings of the giver, while ensuring to please and serve him for the rest of your life.

I even wonder more at those who could enslave free men by the too mortal little they give but never do so!

A free man is only enslaved with showing kindness!

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-NINE

Advice for the Youth

Youth should be careful of indulging in too much sexual intercourse after reaching his age of puberty (upon marriage).

This is important so he can maintain his essence [i.e. semen] to benefit him in his old age. It is like how a person should prepare for winter before the season arrives, and whoever spends all of what he has when he is capable, will endure poverty when he is in need.

He who is intellectual and religious should understand that pleasure is attained by being close with their lover and such closeness and nearness happens with cuddling and kissing, as such intimacy strengthens the love (*maḥabba*) between the couple and such love is pleasurable when it exists, while copulation weakens such emotions and halts such pleasure (*ladha*).

Arabs fell in love and believed that the beloved should not be copulated. Some of them said, 'Engaging in sexual intercourse with the lover shall ruin the love in between.' It is because receiving pleasure from copulation, by itself, is an animalistic thing.

I contemplated the purpose of copulation and realised an amazing meaning that many seem to fail to notice, that is: when someone falls in love with a person, he would like to be close to her; hence a lover prefers hugging and cuddling because it is the ultimate physical closure.

Yet then a person pursues further nearness and so he kisses the cheek, and after a while he pursues further closure to the soul (*rūḥ*) of his lover and so he kisses the lips as it is the gateway of the soul.

Then, he feels the urge to be closer and so he sucks the tongue of his lover and the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to hug and kiss 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*) and suck her tongue too.[197]

And, should the soul pursue further closure, copulation becomes the last means.

This is the subtle intangible meaning of copulation and through which physical pleasure is attained.

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[197] Reference already mentioned.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY

The Danger of Rhetoric Theology (*ilm al-kalām*) for Laypeople

There is nothing more harmful on laypeople than hearing philosophy.

Laypeople should be warned and discouraged to listen to, or even be involved in it similar to how a child is warned from standing on the bank of a river, fearing he may drown in it.

If a layperson assumes he has the intellectual capacity to comprehend this science, he should know he is mistaken and such an assumption is corrupted because many scholars were corrupted because of it so what do you think will be the case of a layperson?

I have not seen any people more foolish than the story tellers of my time, because when ignorant laypeople come to listen to them, they neither command them against drinking alcohol, fornication or backbiting, nor teach them the pillars of prayer (*ṣalah*) and acts of worship. Instead they spend all their time talking about interpretation of Allāh's Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) and *Istiwā'*, and that the Speech of Allāh (*kalāmAllāh*) is an indispensable part of the Essence, causing the heart with sound creed (*īmān*) to be harmed and disturbed.

Laypeople should be sufficed in believing in the five fundamentals;[198] Allāh, His Angels, His Divine Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, and suffice with what the righteous predecessors stated, that the speech of Allāh (*kalāmAllāh*) is uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*) and that *Istiwā'* is a truthful (*ḥaqq*) fact and the 'how and why' is unknown (*majhūl*).

They should also understand that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) did not order the Bedouins with anything except to believe in Allāh, and the Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) never spoke about the theory of atoms and accidents.

He who dies upon the path (*tarīq*) of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*) shall die upon faith, and be saved from innovation (*bidʿah*).

And he who dares to stand on the shore of the sea without knowing how to swim, will most likely drown.

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[198] The six articles of faith also include *Qadā wa'l-Qadr*, the belief in pre-destination

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-ONE

The Disease of Indulging in Pleasures

The most ignorant types of people (*juhhal*) are those who indulge in satisfying and fulfilling their lusts (*shahawāt*) and desires (*ladhāt*). These are of two types; lawful and unlawful. As for the lawful pleasures, it is often they cannot be attained except by transgression and neglecting major parts of religion.

The bit of pleasure shall be accompanied with much shock and distress, and such lawful pleasures are rarely free of disturbance as there are thousands of factors disturbing them.

So, if a person thinks of the fact that such pleasures will vanish and only the distress of it shall remain, he will realise his perception contravenes his desires and so he will endure grief. If he abstains from such pleasures, it will be because he does not wish to endure the expectant and lasting grief for he understands it is a pleasure that may deceive and tempt the youth, and then turn the life into an everlasting sorrow.

In spite all that, whoever indulges in his desires is never satisfied; whenever he finishes from one pleasure he seeks another, knowing the shortcoming of the first one and its consequences.

This is a disease (*maraḍ*) that afflicts the mind (*ʿaql*) and the innate nature (*ṭabʿ*), therefore a person in such a state remains like that until death kidnaps him to then be laid down on the garment of regret without being able to make up for what he missed.

I truly wonder at a person with such endeavours while knowing his lifetime is short. He cares not for his Hereafter that contains pure pleasures, complete, everlasting and free of any defect. To draw such pleasures, one should push away these worldly pleasures—for to build up the pleasures of the Hereafter one should neglect the pleasures of this worldly life.

I equally wonder at an intellectual wise person who fails to notice the difference between the pleasures of this life and the pleasures of the Hereafter. As for unlawful pleasures, it will include in addition to the previous mentioned issues, deserving the shame of this life, being exposed in public, receiving the prescribed punishment in this life and the Hereafter and deserving the wrath of Allāh.

If lawful pleasures distract one from achieving virtues and good deeds, then what about forbidden pleasures that are ultimate failings?

I ask Allāh to grant us an awakening that motivates us to seek what benefits us and keeps us away from our beds (to pray).

He is indeed Most Hearing.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-TWO

Causes of Going Astray

I contemplated mankind and realised that their condition is so unbelievable it make one's mind unable to comprehend.

Such a case is that of a person who listens to a sermon and he is reminded about the Hereafter. Although he believes the truthfulness of all that he heard, and he cries for his shortcomings and from failing in his duties, and so decides to endeavour to catch up with what he missed and overlooked—yet he fails to comply with what he intended to do.

If someone said to him, 'Do you doubt any of what you are promised [in the Hereafter]?' his answer will be, 'No, by Allāh, I do not have any doubt.' Then when he is advised to perform good deeds, he intends to do so but then he does not do them. In fact, he may later incline to a forbidden pleasure (*ladha muḥarama*) of which he is aware is impermissible.

This type can be found in the story of the three people who remained behind in the Madīnah and did not join the army [in the battle of Tabūk][199] and who had no valid excuse though they were aware of the severity of such an act. The same is the case with every sinner (*'āsī*) and heedless person (*ghāfil*).

However, when I thought of the reason of those whom I assumed to have a sound belief (*'itiqād ṣaḥīḥ*) yet their deeds are lacking and not as they should be, I came to realise three reasons cause people to be in such a condition:

(1) Thinking of their current desires (*hawā*) which prevent them from thinking (*fikr*) of the consequences of abiding to such desires.

(2) Delaying repentance (*taswīf bi'l-tawbah*); because if the intellect of people prevailed, it would have made people beware of the harm of delaying repentance (*tawbah*) because death may come all of a sudden before they repent.

I wonder at mankind who believe their soul may be taken in a period less than one hour, but are still not being resolute and endeared to work for such a moment. It is one's desire that makes a person think he will live a long life. This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Pray as if it is your last prayer"[200] and this is the cure for such illnesses because he who believes he will not live long enough to witness the next prayer (*ṣalah*), he will endeavour hard.

(3) Hoping for Allāh's mercy (*rajā' al-raḥma*); hence sinners often say: 'My Lord is the Most Merciful (*rabbī raḥīm*)' but they seem

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[199] They are Ka'b Ibn Mālik, Hilāl Ibn Umayyah and Murāra Ibn al-Rabī' (*radiyAllāhu 'anhum*). Their story is mentioned in Bukhārī, #4418 and Muslim, #2769. Refer to *Surah Tawba*h (9): 106 and 118.

[200] Ibn Mājah, #4171 on the authority of Abū Ayyūb (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*). It is ḥasan see *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah*.

> to forget that His Punishment is severe (*shadīd al-ʿiqāb*). In fact, sinners should understand that His Mercy (*raḥma*) neither entails softness nor weakness—otherwise He would not have created pain or decreed children to suffer sometimes, and also he should remember that His Punishment is severe for He decreed that he who steals as low as five dirhams is to have his hand cut off. This understanding should make them achieve more and work harder.

I ask Allāh to grant us a determination that makes us resolute in our affairs.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-THREE

Disciplining the Self to be Humble and have Humility in Front of Allāh

I contemplated what has been narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) when he wore a ring but then removed it and threw it away as he disliked to be adorned with it, so he explained: “I was too busy seeing you all busy [i.e. fascinated] looking at it and seeing myself how much I liked it.”[201]

I also contemplated what he (ﷺ) said: “While a man was walking, dragging his dress with pride; he was caused to be swallowed by the earth and will go on sinking in it till the Day of Resurrection.”[202]

I understood then that a believer should not wear a garment or any adornment he likes too much because that will make him have pride in himself while *‘the self’* (*nafs*) should be always in humility (*dalīl*) before its Lord.

The Jewish scholars of Bani Isrāʾīl used to walk using sticks so they do not walk in an arrogant or proud way.

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[201] *Musnad* Aḥmad: 1/322 and Nasāʾī, #5304. It is ṣaḥīḥ.

[202] Bukhārī, 7/183

And the mother of the believers, ʿĀ'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*), wore a garment once that she liked [so much] but the Prophet (ﷺ) said to her: "Allāh shall not look at you while you are in such a state"[203] and when the Prophet (ﷺ) wore a colorful garment he said: "I was distracted with this garment while praying."[204]

All this should make us avoid such types of adornment and beautification and all that which may provoke pride (*fakhr*), arrogance (*ʿajb*) and any sense of superiority (*ẓahw*), which explains why it is made forbidden to wear silk [for men].

Based on this, wearing the garments that have patches that ascetics wear and flash to the public may bring forth such condemnable feelings, either due to the beauty of such a garment or due to the sign of asceticism (*ẓuhd*) it indicates.

The same is the case with wearing rings or having extra-long sleeves, or wearing different types of shoes.

I do not say that such clothes are forbidden but rather I say wearing such types of clothes may bring forth forbidden pride or arrogance. That being said, an intelligent person should heed the advice I have mentioned to ward off anything that may cause evil or lead to harm.

Ibn ʿUmar (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhumā*) once mounted a fast camel and he liked how fast it was so he got off and asked his servant Nāfiʿ to release him and put it in the camels allocated to be slaughtered in Makkah on *ḥajj*.

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[203] Bukhārī, #5789 and Muslim, #2088 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*)

[204] Bukhārī, #373 and Muslim, #556 on the authority of ʿĀ'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FOUR

Being Mindful of Allāh when Alone

Whoever wants his concerns to be removed and his heart to be rectified (*islāh qalb*), should avoid associating with people in this era. Because before people used to gather for benefit [of talking and performing good deeds], while today's gathering comprise of nothing but harm.

I also tried to seclude my *'self'* many times in the house of solitude (*'uzla*) and thereby it became strong. I reinforced such strength with reviewing the stories of the righteous predecessors (*sirah al-salaf*). I thus found such solitude to be a diet, and reading such stories a medicine— taking the medicine while following a diet when one is sick will bring benefit. Similarly if I permit myself to mix with people and meet them, my focused heart becomes distracted. I overlook what I previously heeded, and the heart becomes engraved with the images that my eyes see. My consciousness inscribes in it what the ears have heard, and *'the self'* becomes eager to attain worldly benefits. This is all because the majority of people are heedless (*ghafla*) and sitting with them will make 'the self' steal from their habits.

Afterwards, when I try reaching out to my heart (*qalb*), I no longer can find it and start missing the feelings [of tranquillity and peace in being mindful of Allāh and worshiping Him] I used to have in my solitude, hence my heart remains in such a condition for days until it overcomes the effect.

What benefit may someone gain by demolishing his building? Remaining in solitude is like the building and looking into the stories of the righteous predecessors is like the means whereby the building is lifted up. Mingling with people will tear apart what has been built over a long time within a minute, notwithstanding the heart becoming weak and more difficult to retrieve. Such a condition can be only realised by a person who knows the [spiritual] sicknesses of the heart (*maraḍ al-qalb*) to understand and know when it turns away from its owner, and when the bird leaves it cage!

The sick, in such a case, cannot be assured that such a sickness will not ruin his heart or that the captured bird will not to fall in the trap!

The cause of the sickness of the heart was that it was on a diet of avoiding mixing with people and fed with knowledge (*'ilm*) and stories of the righteous predecessors (*sirah al-salaf*). Then suddenly it broke its diet and mixed with people; hence it could not handle such a disturbance thus becoming sick.

One should hence endeavour harder because it will not be long before we find out who we can meet or take [benefit] from, or find whose company is good, except in very rare cases that I am unaware of.

So keep yourself in your solitude (*khalwa*) and take care of what has remained from the self. And, know if *'the self'* (*nafs*) becomes disturbed because it longs to associate with people, it is then debased so tame it until it finds being in the company of mankind as something it despises.

For if it was attached to its Creator (*al-Khāliq*), it would not find joy in being in the company of others, as this is like the example of a person in the company of whom he loves in privacy and hence he does not care, or is not affected by the presence of anyone else!

Indeed, if the heart falls in love with Yemen, it will never consider the Levant (*Shām*).[205]

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[205] May Allāh bring peace and tranquillity to our beloved Yemen and Shām (Syria).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FIVE

Guidance (*hidāyah*) is From Allāh

I contemplated the cause of people's guidance (*hidāyah*) and their awakening from heedless (*ghafla*). I came to realise the main cause behind it is such people were chosen by Allāh, Most High. It is as was said: 'When Allāh wants you to do a matter, He prepares you for it.'

Awakening can sometimes happen by having a mere thought one's intellect (*'aql*) necessitates to consider, leading him to realise his existence and thereby concluding his existence necessitates having a Creator; so Allāh demands from him the fulfilment of His rights upon him and thankfulness (*shukr*) for His Graces (*ni'm*). He warned him with His Punishment (*'iqāb*), which cannot be due to an apparent reason.

This is similar to the case of the people of the cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*),

إِذْ قَامُوا۟ فَقَالُوا۟ رَبُّنَا رَبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

> "When they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth.'"
>
> [*al-Kahf* (18): 14]

The books of *tafsīr* state, 'Each one of them found in his heart a moment of awakening that made them believe that such creation must have a Creator. Hence, their inner selves ignited further due to the fuelled fire of their cautiousness, which made each one depart to the desert where all of them met without any prior arrangement. They asked each other about the reason that made them leave for the desert and their answers were truthful.'

In some other cases, Allāh uses some people to create such apparent causes, like initiating intellectual thinking and contemplation; thus some people either awaken due to a sermon they heard or a lesson they witness that makes this apparent cause jolt the inner thought of the heart. The awakened are then divided into those whose desires overcome them and so their nature returns them to the desires they are accustomed—making them deviate again causing them not to benefit from such an awakening. In fact, this awakening establishes the proof against them [on the Day of Judgment].

And there are those who strive and stand in the middle—between their desires that encourage them to follow worldly pleasures—and their sensibility that encourage them to fear Allāh.

Some of them strive over a longer time period but eventually deviate back to evil and their lives comes to such an evil end, while others manage to overcome their desires once and fail to do so again after some times. But eventually their wounds caused by such struggles do not cause their death.

Other people yet still manage to subdue their enemy and imprison it making such an enemy stand helpless without weapon but casting whispers to them.

From among the elite [i.e. selected ones] are people whose hearts never fall into sleep after their awakening and so they never stop since embarking on the journey [to Allāh].

This is because their endeavours and goals are aimed high. Each time they reach a higher rank they realise more of their shortcomings and pitfalls. Therefore they seek forgiveness. On the other hand, some of them may require striving either due to the lowliness of what their nature may call for—though it does not affect them—or either due to the honour of what they endeavour to achieve so they do not mind the hardship caused by it.

You should know that the way to Allāh cannot be walked using feet but rather using hearts, and that the sudden impulse desires of the hearts are bandits and thieves. While the road you embark on is like a dark night.

Yet the eye of the one whom Allāh guides, is like the eye sight of the horse; thereby he's able to see in the dark just as clear as it can see in the daytime.

And sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) while embarking on the road is a beacon that directs to the right direction. Only those with insincere intentions will stumble in their walk, and those who refuse to be sincere are those whom Allāh does not select (for guidance).

And there is no power and strength except with Allāh.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SIX

Arrogance

I wonder at him who is fond of his own image and walks with pride while forgetting the beginning of his creation.

His life starts with the small bite of bread, a couple of dates, a piece of meat and some milk that were consumed with a sip of water; afterwards is filtered through the liver and extracted from it are drops of semen that settle in the testicles, which later on are moved by the excitement of his lust to eject out of him and into the mother to remain for a while before the foetus is developed; coming out through the channel of urine as a child.

As for his end, he is thrown in dust to be eaten by worms and becomes ashes the wind blows!

And the ashes of his body keeps moving from one place to another until the Day of Judgment where all his ashes gather again to resurrect once again. This is the story of the body.

As for the soul (*rūḥ*) that is commanded to work righteousness, if its essence was disciplined with manners and straightened with knowledge (*'ilm*), it shall realise the existence of the Creator and will fulfil its duties without being affected by the ruining of its ship [i.e. the body].

If it remained ignorant however, then it becomes like clay or even worse.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SEVEN

Moderation in Life

It is farfetched to imagine a person focusing on his Hereafter while he is overwhelmed with worldly affairs, particularly in the case of the poor youth who has been in poverty (*faqr*) all his life; if he got married while having no wealth whatsoever, all his focus will be on working to earn his provision or begging people, both which will distract him from focusing on his Hereafter.

If he begets children he will work even harder than to provide for his family. So he keeps justifying his means of earning until he falls into the prohibited. All this because of his thinking about what he and his family will eat, the cloth and spend that makes his wife content! If a person has a mind busying itself in all that, how will he have a heart thinking of the Hereafter? Never!

By Allāh, a person can never remind himself of the Hereafter while his eyes look at people, his ears listen to people, his tongue talks with people and his heart is being too busy seeking what he needs to have.

If someone asks, 'What should a person in such a case do then?'
I say, 'If you can find what suffices you from this worldly life, be

content with it so that you can seclude yourself from people as much as possible. And when you wish to marry, opt for a poor woman who will be satisfied and content with the little she will live on. In return you need to accept her appearance and poverty [even if she is not what you wished for]. Do not let yourself aspire to be with a wife who will spend on you from her extra money.

If you are blessed with a pious wife then you will be able to focus on your Hereafter otherwise you will just have to be patient, and this is much better than taking risks. And beware of [marrying] beautiful women because, if you are saved [from their *fitnah*] you will be like an idol worshipper. If you earn some money do not spend it all, but spare some for the future to help you maintain your attention to the Hereafter [when you are in need of money].'

Beware of this era and its people for today there is no more generosity or empathy in people. None of them even care to help a friend, and if someone begs anything from them, he will not give away anything; if he does, he will give away while showing annoyance not only to show favour to the beggar and enslave him with this little give away for the rest of his life—but will also belittle him whenever he sees him, or demand him to serve him because of the help provided to him, and expecting him to visit him often for that reason.

In contrast, in the old times people were like Abū 'Amr Ibn Najid who heard once Abū 'Uthmān Al-Maghribī saying while standing on the pulpit, 'I am indebted for one-thousand *dinārs* and that makes me live in distress.'

So, Abū 'Amr visited him at night giving him one-thousand *dinārs* to settle his debt. Abū 'Uthmān later stood on the pulpit and said, 'I thank Allāh for the good deed of Abū 'Amr who eased my heart and paid my debt.' Abū 'Amr stood up and said, 'O Shaykh, the money I gave you was my mothers who felt sorry for your situation. So if you like to repay it, please do so.' Then, later in the night, he went to Abū 'Uthmān and said, 'Why have you made my deed public? I did not do it for the sake of people so keep the money and never mention me.'

Stay as far as possible away from those whose concern is worldly affair and whose effect on you will not be anything but evil. In fact, all whom you see today are those who show friendship while hiding enmity in their hearts, envying you for the bounties you have and happy for any harm you endure.

Buy solitude regardless of its price because if a man whose heart is mindful of Allāh walks in the markets he will return home with a different heart, so how would it be if the heart was attached to worldly pleasures?

Endeavour to work for your Hereafter by staying far from people, so your heart can be free and devoted to thinking of the final destination!

Let your insight notice the tents of those departing [this life].

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-EIGHT

Loneliness is Much Better than Being in the Company of Evil People

In the olden times, if the heart of the seeker (*murid*) was darkened or inflicted with [spiritual] disease he would go visit some of the pious and righteous people to relinquish the darkness from his heart (*qalb*).

Today however, as the seeker enjoys an atom of sincerity he would run into the house of solitude (*'uzla*) where he basks in the breeze from the spirit of safety (*rūḥ al-'āfiya*) and enjoys a light (*nūr*) in his heart.

He becomes focused on his Hereafter and his affairs remain intact, but when he leaves seeking whoever is pointed at (as being righteous or knowledgeable), he finds them sitting with idle people and involved in their inintelligent path that brings no benefit in seeing such a person who finds it easy to waste time in trivial topics and in despicable ways.

And so, the seeker returns with some darkness in his heart and distracted from focusing on his Hereafter and weakness (*ḍa'f*) in his will; his heart becoming sick and spending many days until he manages to rectify it and restore its original state.

It is very possible that he may not manage to do so due to the weakness of the *murīd*, and so he falls into tribulation (*fitnah*) because he may be influenced by seeing a Shaykh who is known for his worship but then found to prefer idleness and worldly affairs too!

Today the seeker should reconsider the option of visiting pious people and opt for visiting the graveyards and being in the company of books that mention the virtues of the righteous people.

Seek assistance of Allāh in directing to what pleases Him because if He wants, He will prepare you for what pleases Him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTY-NINE

Characteristics of the *Awliyā'*

I pondered about those whom Allāh chooses to be close to Him from His friends (*awliyā'*).

After hearing their descriptions and seeing those who we assume to be among them. I realised that Allāh only chooses for this rank a person whose appearance is not faulty and whose body has no disability—so he is good looking with a fair height and healthy body.

And from inside, he is of a generous nature, intelligent, honest and his heart is free of envy or ill feelings or any inner defects. These types of people are the ones whom Allāh nurtured since their childhood; so you see them at such a young age avoid being with children and looking as an older man at a very young age; abstaining from whatever may degrade him or lower his rank. The tree of his endeavours keep growing until he finds its fruits falling down the branches of youthfulness. Therefore he is keen to seek knowledge and is always busy worshiping [Allāh]. He also appreciates time and never wastes it, always pursuing virtues and afraid of shortcomings.

If you see the divine guidance wrapping him, you will notice how such guidance holds his hand whenever he slips and averts his errs that he intended. Encouraging him towards virtues and concealing his good deeds from everyone.

These types of people are of different kinds; the worshipper, ascetic, and the knowledgeable person adhering to the Sunnah. And it is a very rare case to find a person who Allāh chose, to combine both aspects and elevate him to join the rank of perfect ones.

The sign indicating perfection of a person who combined knowledge and worship is that such a person will be totally devoted and dedicated to worship Allāh and loving Him. Performing and involving in all the virtuous deeds and having the highest endeavours to reach the possible human perfection.

The ranks of this special selection are beyond description as it is the gem of existence that does not grow in any shell except the loved ones.

I ask Allāh to guide us to please Him, to be close to Him and I seek His refuge from being expelled and banished.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY

Wretched People

The majority of mankind has a wretched nature that cannot be rectified except with self-discipline (*riyāḍa*), for they neither know the reason why they were created nor understand the purpose of their life.

Their endeavours are dedicated in attaining worldly pleasures without care of blame they receive when such pleasures are gotten. In fact, they give up their honour to acquire what they want and prefer a moment of joy even if it will cause a lifetime of sickness.

When they trade, they wear the clothing of con artists while demonstrating arrogance and their transactions are deceptive while they conceal their reality. In other words, if they earn and consume from a doubtful source, they eat with eagerness and desire.

Their eyes are asleep all night long and their hearts are asleep all day long and the latter is the real sleepiness. When they are awake in the morning they spend their days fulfilling their desires as assiduous as a swine and like a dog when shaking its tail hoping to receive something.

They devour such pleasures like a lion when it preys, and as sneaky as a fox and attacking as a wolf. And when they are on death beds, they cry over losing the worldly pleasures they had instead of grieving over not having piety!

ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ

"That is their sum of knowledge"

[*al-Najm* (53): 30]

How could a person prefer what he sees in his own eyes over what he sees in his heart and mind and who appreciates more the images he sees with his eyes more than what he sees with his insightfulness?

By Allāh, if they open their ears they would have heard the call of departure loud in the house of dwelling echoing in the sides of this world saying: "reflect on the ruins of the tents of the old dwellers!"

But, they drown in the intoxication of ignorance (*sukr al-juhāla*) and only awaken when they are being punished.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-ONE

Allāh is Good and Accepts only the Good

I noticed that the ruling given by some scholars regarding the lawful and unlawful earning of wealth by rulers, who then spend some of their money to build schools and places of worship (for Ṣūfīs), gives some comfort to the heart of the charity giver of this kind, and they would mention to them that spending the money not belonging to them is a rewarding deed since he does not know to whom this unlawful money [he acquired] belongs to so that he could give it back to them!

I said: 'I wonder at such people who step forward to give verdicts when they do not know the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-sharī'ah*)!'

The condition of one giving charity should be investigated first; for the ruler, the avenues through which public money should be spent are known, so he can neither prevent those entitled to receiving their right, nor utilise the money in what brings no benefit such as Ṣūfi schools and houses.

If the charity giver is a governor or a deputy ruler then he should return to the treasury (i.e. *bayt al māl*) what must be returned since he is only entitled to receive from it what is assigned for him.

Thus, if he spends from other than the money he is entitled to, he will be using wealth that does not belong to him, and if he permits the use of such money, his permission will be invalid. If he feudalises what is not necessary to perform his duties it will be unlawful to take or give since it is the right belonging to the general public (Muslims) that he has no authority over—and similarly the one who feudalised this money or property will be sinful to accept.

If the money is unlawful or forcefully acquired then whatever is done with it will be prohibited. It must be returned it to the lawful owners or their heirs in case of the death of the owner.

If the lawful owner or heirs can not be found then the money should be deposited in the Muslim treasury (*bayt al māl*) to spend either on matters benefiting the public or in charity, because whatever the cause he will spend this unlawful money on, he will be sinful.

It was reported that Al-Qāsim Ibn Mukhaymrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever earns a wealth from unlawful sources then used this money to join a kinship or for charity or spending it in path of Allāh, all that will be gathered and thrown in the hellfire."[206]

However, if a person is a trader who earned his money from lawful sources and spends his money to build a *Masjid* or dedicated an endowment for jurists, he will be rewarded for such deeds. But a person earning his wealth from lawful sources would do this when he has extra wealth after he pays the *zakah* as he then should be pleased to build and spend since such deeds cannot be from the *zakah* money as sincerity (*sālama al-niyya*) and sound intention (*khulūṣ al-maqṣad*) are required!

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[206] Abū Dāwūd in *al-Marāsīl*, 1/142 see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa'l-Tarhīb*, #1721. The ḥadīth is ḥasan with supportive narrations.

Besides, building schools nowadays is a risk since most of those seeking knowledge in the field of jurisprudence focus on learning philosophy (to debate and discuss controversial issues) and are no longer interested in learning sciences of religion, and rarely attend the Masjid as they suffice with schools and titles.

Building gathering houses is not even something of value because the majority of ascetics are lazy and ignorant who claim to be loved by Allāh and close to Him. They dislike learning religious knowledge and do not follow the steps of Sarī and Al Junayd— they only perform the obligatory acts and are content with wearing [worn out] clothes with patches on them. It is unreasonable to assist them in being lazy, idle and laid back and there's nothing rewarding in doing such act.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-TWO

Fruits of Sincerity

I wonder at he who pretends to be an abstainer [i.e. practicing self-denial and having no interest in worldly pleasures and affairs] in the hope of being near to the hearts of people while forgetting that their hearts are controlled by the One for Whose sake he performs his deeds, and if He is pleased with his deeds and deemed sincere then He will draw the hearts of people to him, and if not, He will turn the hearts of people away from him.

If a person heeds to the hearts of mankind, whether they like him or not, then his intention is mixed with shirk because he should only suffice with the One for Whom he performs his deeds.

It is because sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) necessitates that a person does not intend to attract the attention of hearts of people to him as such attention should happen not by seeking it but rather by disliking it.

This is because one should know that people will see the signs of his deeds, in general, even if they did not see any of them because hearts testify to the righteousness of the pious even if they do not see his deeds.

However, a person who intends to let people become aware of his deeds should understand that his deeds will be in vain because such deeds will neither be accepted by Allāh nor people whose hearts are made to turn away from him causing his knowledge and life to be wasted.

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "If one of you worked inside a solid stone that has no door or a window, his deeds will still go out to the people, regardless of who he is."[207]

Thus, a slave [of Allāh] should fear Allāh and turn to the One who can benefit him and pay no attention to the praise he may receive as it shall inflict him and others with a trial.

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[207] *Musnad* Aḥmad (3/28), see *Ḍaʿīf al-Jāmiʿ*, #4799. The ḥadīth is weak.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-THREE

Jurists of *Fitnah*

One day, a jurist who was a judge of a city from the non-Arab lands arrived in our city and I saw his camel adorned with gold and silver and many other prohibited matters.

So I said to myself, 'Knowledge has not benefited this person.'

In fact there are many proofs established against him. The most important reason for these kinds of people being in such a state is due to their lack of knowledge about the life of the righteous predecessors and the way of life of the Prophet (ﷺ). Their all-in-all ignorance and busyness with controversial issues and not being well versed in knowledge leads them to not caring or listening to ḥadith about the righteous predecessors.

They associate with rulers that makes them wear clothes similar to theirs, which is a matter they may even think is too trivial to be worried about. If they do not think about it you will find their desires prevail, and they may even think that such an act is excusable and is nothing compared to their occupation with knowledge.

And when the scholars praise and compliment rulers in the hope of receiving a worldly benefit, they do not object or condemn that!

I even saw some of those who attribute themselves to knowledge accompanying clean-shaven boys and purchase male servants, which are actions only he who has no hope in the Hereafter would do! And I have seen some who've reached the age of eighty and still live such a lifestyle.

I urge those who are certain about the Hereafter and want to safeguard their religiousness to beware of adopting corrupted and invalid interpretations. Being overpowered with desires, for if you compromise and got involved in part of it, you will eventually be dragged into all of it. Then you will not be able to get out due to the familiarity of nature with desires.

Heed you therefore the advice I offer and be content with the piece you will have and stay away from those whose concern is worldly pleasures.

If your desires encouraged you to be involved in all that do not listen because if it invites you to a matter by belittling it in your eyes, you should know that this small thing will call for bigger things that you cannot avoid afterwards.

Be patient and bear the hardship of life conditions and abstain from being with those whose concern is worldly pleasures for your religion cannot be perfected except by doing so.

Compromising on one matter shall lead to another. Just as the waves on the ocean lead to the beach. Just as one food that is better than other foods. Just as one [set of] clothes that are better than other clothes. Just as a face that is prettier then another faces.
Life is only a few days.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FOUR

Submit to what is Beyond your Knowledge

Whoever thinks of the greatness of Allāh, Most High, will have his mind baffled because it will try to prove an existence whose existence has no beginning, nor something that can be proved by one's senses but rather by one's intellect admitting to it forcefully.

Even after such recognition, a person stands confused as he sees signs proving His existence and witnessing some of His decrees that would cause a person to deny His existence was not the proof on which His existence was established.

He split the sea for Bani Isrā'eel and that is a matter only the Creator can be capable of; He turned the stick into a snake then turned it back to a stick again devouring all that the magicians made without having any addition in it. So what more evidence does one need than that?

When the sorcerers believe [in Him], He leaves Pharaoh to punish and crucify them, and He let His Prophets be inflicted with hunger and be murdered; [Prophet] Zakariyyah (*'alayhi as-salām*) was sawn in half, [Prophet] Yaḥyā (*'alayhi as-salām*) murdered by a fornicator, and our Prophet (ﷺ) would say for many years, "Who shall support me? Who shall shelter me?"[208]

To the extent that those ignorant about the existence of the Creator said, 'If He existed; He would have supported His supporters.'

The intelligent one who affirms with certainty the existence of the Creator with evident obvious proofs, must neither permit nor empower his intellectuality to object to any of His actions or even demand a justification for what He does.

It is evident for him that He is the Most Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) and the All-Sovereign (*al-Mālik*); hence if we fail to notice the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) of His Actions, we should attribute this shortcoming to our own understanding.

How do we not do so when even [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) could not realise the wisdom behind tearing apart of the ship or the murdering of the young child, but when he realised the wisdom of what appeared as corrupted, he admitted and accepted them.

Truly, if the wisdom of His actions manifested to mankind, the intellect of [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) would not have objected to the actions of Al-Khidr when he performed those actions.

Whenever you find your intellect question any of His Actions, shut it up with saying, "O incompetent incapable creature! If you cannot even realise the truth of your own essence, how dare you object to the actions of the All-Sovereign!"

The intellect may also ask, 'What benefit is there in putting people to trials? Why does He not reward people without inflicting them with calamities? What is the purpose of punishing people in Hell, is that not a form of retaliation?'

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[208] Aḥmad, #14243, see *Silsila al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, #63 on the authority of Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh (*raḍiy. Allāhu 'anhu*). The ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ.

In such a case, you should respond with, 'His Wisdom is far beyond your level, therefore you should submit to what is beyond your knowledge, because the first one who objected to what he has no knowledge of was *Shaytān* who thought fire is more superior than clay and hence he refused to prostrate.'

I saw plenty of people and heard of many people who question the divine wisdom because they let their judgments be based on the level of their minds (i.e. human intellectuality) while they seem to forget that the wisdom of the Creator *(al-Khāliq)* is beyond the imagination of their minds.

Beware of giving your mind the space to request a justification or to quest for a counterargument to what it may introduce. Rather, you should say to it, "submit and you shall be saved because you do not know the depth of the sea and if you swim in it, you shall drown before you come to know it."

This is indeed one great principle (*aṣl 'aẓīm*); whoever overlooks it, his objections and questioning will lead him to disbelief (*kufr*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FIVE

Taking Example from Yourself

I wonder at him who says, 'Go! visit the graveyard and let the deceased be a good reminder for you.'

While he seems to forget that within himself exists a graveyard that should suffice him in looking for other reminders. Particularly when the person is aged, he becomes weak in desires, has a powerless body, his senses have become weak, his energy has depleted and his hair is grey.

Hence, he should take an example of what he lost and suffice with it.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-SIX

Awakening of the Intelligent

When the sensibility of a person is perfect and complete. He loses his interest in this worldly life causing his body to become weak (*saqm*) and his concern [about the Hereafter] becomes strong, and his grief (*ḥuzn*) becomes great.

This is because when the mind observes and heeds the consequences, it shall abstain from this worldly life and focus on what he noticed as he does not find a joy in the instant [i.e. this life].

It is only those who heed not for the Hereafter who will enjoy this life because a perfect complete intelligent person is immune to this type of heedlessness (*ghafla*).

This explains his inability to socialise with mankind as he finds them strangers to him as if they are like aliens!

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-SEVEN

The Truths of Resurrection

The *Ṭabāʿyūn*[209] claim that the essence of creation is made of water, earth, fire and air, and on the Day of Judgment these essences will be vanished and then Allāh will bring life into it again so it becomes known that it happened due to His Power (*qudra*) and not because of the effect of the overall substances.

I say in response: 'He who questions the resurrection is subsequently questioning the divine wisdom (*ḥikmah*).'

And whoever claims that the soul is a mere consequence is actually denying resurrection! This is because the consequence does not last after bodies turn into dust, so if anything is found it will be the beginning of creation.

Nay, by Allāh, He resurrects both the soul (*rūḥ*) and body (*jasd*) of the self, which is evident in the verse,

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾

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[209] Philosophers who believe the universe is made of four natural elements; fire, earth, air and water.

> "A speaker among them will say, 'Indeed, I had a companion [on earth].'"
>
> [*al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 51]

wherein it mentions that even what accompanied the self shall be resurrected too.

By His Glory, His Mercy, in the beginning is an evidence of the existence of the end; He implanted in parents love for children, let the breast of the mother produce milk, made foods grow, and made the mind able to realise the consequences. How then is it possible after all this planning and organising to say He neglects the world after death and so He resurrects none?

He created the creation to be known for He was an unknown treasure; hence how can anyone think He will resurrect none and be unknown again?

Exalted be He, Who blinded most of the hearts from knowing Him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-EIGHT

Signs of His Existence

Exalted is He Who manifested to mankind until there is nothing hidden from them, then He veiled Himself until He no longer can be seen!

He manifested through His creations that they all speak out about having a Creator Who created them according to His Divine Wisdom.

This is evident particularly in mankind whom He created from a drop of water and whom He constructed marvellously. He empowered them with understanding, reasoning, sensibility and knowledge—for whom He laid down earth. He created water, air, made plants grow and lift the sky above that He enlightened with sun during the daytime, then brought forth darkness in the night so mankind can rest.

And also many other creations that are known, all speaking out with an eloquently clear voice pointing to the Creator Who manifested in these signs a clear way.

Then He sent the Messengers; poor, weak and made them subdue the tyrants and manifested on their hands miracles that no human can be capable of! All these also indicate the truthfulness of the existence of the Creator.

For instance, [Prophet] Mūsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) arrived at the shore of the sea and He split it to leave people no doubt that it is the Creator who did that. While [Prophet] ʿĪsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) speaks to the dead so it rises. He sends birds throwing rocks from hell at those who intended to attack His House.

Which all indicate the manifestation of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), exalted be He.

That said, when the intelligent realises these facts that leave no space for doubt or suspicion, as His manifestation is evident and obvious through signs that cannot be interpreted in any other way. Then some events happen that may conceal the wisdom behind such events, similar to what I have mentioned previously like how enemies of Allāh are given power over His supporters.

One should realise that there is a wisdom that we do not know, therefore the mind should submit to the Wisdom of the Wise.

Truly, he who submits will be safe and he who objects will be ruined.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SIXTY-NINE

Corrupted Religiousness

Each group claims sparing no effort to reach the truth, and indeed most of them only intend reaching the truth. The monk starves himself and worships. The others are humiliated and pay the *jizyah*.

Each person exaggerates in practicing the teachings of his group and endures pain and harm to receive the assumed reward. However, despite all of that, most of those people are evidently deemed misguided.

This might be problematic to understand and resolve. One should seek guidance by following the means leading to guidance and then employ his endeavours to find clarification. Thus, he who fails to find the means or did not acquire some of the tools cannot be considered a person employing efforts and endeavours in finding the truth (*mujtahid*).

For example, the Jews and Christians are of three types; either a learned one who realised the truthfulness (*sidq*) of our Prophet (ﷺ) but still denied it to maintain his position—making him a stubborn person; or a blind follower (*muqqalid*) who in such a case is considered neglectful as he worships while overlooking the fundamental reason. Therefore bringing no benefit; or a person who investigates but does not do it truthfully, hence he says the Torah states that our religion (i.e. Judaism) cannot be abrogated (*nasq*) while knowing that abrogating religions exist due to change of eras and is truthful. Hence he only says that abrogation happened initially only and does not think of the difference between both events. This is why such a person needs to investigate it truthfully and sincerely.

The example of these kinds of people are the religiousness of the *Khawārij* who, despite their acknowledgment to their limited knowledge (*'ilm*), used to say: 'There is no judgment but the judgment of Allāh' without understanding that seeking the judgment of people is part of the judgment of Allāh, therefore they believed in fighting 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) based on their corrupted belief!

When Muslim Ibn 'Uqbah looted Al Madīnah and killed people he said: 'If I ever enter Hell after this [good deed], I shall be ruined!'

Since he thought with his ignorance (*jahl*) that when the people of Madinah objected to the pledge given to Yazīd that their blood and wealth became lawful to take!

Woe to the layperson whose knowledge is limited and yet does not accuse his understanding. He does not study with a person more knowledgeable than him. Instead he acts upon his own understanding!

This principle (*asl*) should be contemplated because many people were ruined when they overlooked it. I also saw many laypeople refuse to accept a *fatwa* [because they rely on their own understanding]:

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ
خَٰشِعَةٌ ﴿٢﴾ عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ ﴿٣﴾ تَصْلَىٰ نَارًا حَامِيَةً ﴿٤﴾

"Some faces on that Day, will be humiliated. Labouring and toiling endlessly. They will enter in the hot blazing Fire."

[*al-Ghāshiyah* (88):2-4]

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY

The Structure of the Self

'The self' (*nafs*) saves within itself, some elements for the sake of preservation, which include blood and semen in addition to some other elements to maintain strength.

When such elements are depleted, the self is gone too. From other preservation *'the self'* keeps are for purpose of strengthening its essence with wealth, social status and everything else that necessitates joy (*farḥ*).

Thus, if the self was exultant and then lacked these elements, it will be embarrassed, and if it was overwhelmed with fear (*kawf*), it may find no balance of hope (*rajā'*) preserved within to balance it.

And if it was overwhelmingly rejoicing, it may find no balance of fear to balance it, which all will cause it to be ruined.

That said, you should endeavor to preserve the elements of the self, especially old-aged people who should neither rejoice for getting out his blood nor releasing his semen. Even if he happened to be sexually overactive except if such state is abnormal; hence releasing his semen will be for the purpose of ridding himself of the harmful element; and the sign to know it was harmful, a comfort (*rāḥa*) is attained upon its release because if he would feel weak (*ḍaʿf*) afterward, it shows that the act, per se, was harmful.

A man with pride should preserve his status and save his face by avoiding being in a position he would be blamed for because his balance of elements are his pride and confidence and it harms him if it was the opposite.

A person should also be prepared when he is old by having some savings so he is not humiliated or forced to work when he is too weak to work. Letting his enemy inherit his wealth after his death is better than to be in need of a friend at the end of his life; you should pay no attention to those who condemn wealth because they are just ignorant fools who relied upon comfort and enjoyed laziness (*kasl*) and did not mind receiving charity or begging people.

It is evident that every Prophet (ﷺ) had a source of income, and so did the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) who left behind great wealth.

Thus, you should understand this principle very well and heed not the words of the ignorant.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-ONE

The Ascetics of this Era are Hypocrites and Pretenders

I noticed that the ascetics (*zuhhād*) of our time possess pride (*kibr*) and eagerness to preserve (*ḥifẓ*) their wealth and status in the hearts of the common people. Which made me certain of their hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and fakery (*riyā'*).

You find some of them wear garments that people perceive as a sign of rigorous self-denial and self-restraint while they eat the best types of food and are snobbish with their fellows. They enjoy befriending the rich and are distancing the poor people. They enjoying being addressed with the title of master and liked to be walked besides.

They remain in such a state wasting their life living such illusions and on the aid of people and their greetings. This is because if they wear a garment that may confuse them with the jurists, their social status will no longer be maintained and hence they will find no people attached to them! In fact, if their actions matched the clothes they wore; it would be easy to swallow! But they flaunt before people who realise their fakery and so what do they expect when Allāh Sees them and Knows who they are!

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-TWO

The Believer Should Protect Himself

I often repeat this meaning in this book using many different statements.

The believer should focus on his provision and be moderate in his spending because scholars at one time had some allocations from the *bayt al-māl* and friends who showed kindness to them and some support from the laypeople.

When suddenly all these sources became unavailable, leaving the one who dedicated all his time for learning knowledge (*ʿilm*) or worshipping (*taʿabbud*), impoverished and in need, especially if he has a family to support.

I have not witnessed a more bitter time than the current, for you cannot find a reliable person from whom you can seek support or loan. A person is therefore forced to embark on means that are inappropriate to his position and to experience what does not befit him.

That said, a person should consider a small family, be frugal with his provision by patching the holes in his clothes, and if he manages to find a profession from which he can have a source of income, it will be better than dedicating all the time for worship and seeking additional knowledge that is not obligatory. Otherwise his religiousness will be lost as he will have to accept the inappropriate or accept taking from the money of the low cads.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-THREE

The Believer Should Safeguard Himself from what is Possible to Happen

The intelligent one should take all precautions so that whatever Allāh decreed takes place—despite his precautions—will not be blamed.

Taking precautions should be for everything that is possible to take place and so being prepared is obligatory in all cases. The example of those whom did not take precautions are many, among those were: a man who cut his nails in a bad way leading to his hand becoming rotten and causing his death.

My Shaikh, Aḥmad Al-Ḥarbī was once riding on his horse in a very narrow low place and so instead of stepping off, he squeezed himself so tight to pass, it caused him injury and sickness from which he died. Yaḥyā Ibn Nizār was an old man attending my talks, when his hearing became weak he asked a witch doctor to heal him, so this inexperienced doctor sucked out his inner ear causing a damage in his brain, from which he died.

In contrast, observe how the Prophet (ﷺ) took the precaution when he passed in front of an unstable wall so he walked fast.[210]

A person should be wise in spending his earnings while he is youthful so as to have some savings when he becomes aged.

He should trust no transaction until it is documented and ensure having his will written, for death may strike him any moment.

He should also beware of his friends and enemies, and not trust the friendship of a person who harmed him before because grudges rarely vanish from hearts.

He should be careful while dealing with his wife because he may share with her his secrets, and if a dispute takes place later on and they become divorced. She may hold the grudge against him and expose his secrets and ruin him.

The aforesaid are just examples that should serve as reminders of what has not been mentioned but are noteworthy to realise that the most important cautiousness is to be prepared for the Hereafter, and make regular repentance before death strikes.

So a person should beware of the thievery of laziness for it steals your time.

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[210] *Musnad* Ahmad, 2/356 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiyAllahu 'anhu*)

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-FOUR

The Successful Ones Care to Safeguard Religion and be Content with Their Share in Life

I thought about the disputes occurring between kings, the carefulness (*ḥirṣ*) of traders [to generate profits], and the hypocrisy of ascetics (*nifāq al-mutazahidīn*), and found out that most of them fight over tangible worldly pleasures (*ladhāt*).

When the intelligent contemplate all of that, they will realise the lifespan of tangible pleasures is short and they inevitably end, and that the purpose of such pleasures is unattainable.

If one exaggerates his efforts in this regard the harm caused accordingly shall be many times more than the pleasures he attained. It is like the one who eats a lot or copulates a lot.

The successful happy one is he who cares to protect his religion and seeks from all these pleasures only what he needs.

I wonder! When the cost of apparel is affordable, it serves [the purpose and covers the body] and when it is highly priced, it serves the same purpose too. However, if the wearer becomes proud of what he wears, Allāh will not look at him then because it is reported in the authentic ḥadīth, "While a man was walking, dragging his dress with pride; he was caused to be swallowed by the earth."

As for beverages, if someone drinks what is prohibited (*ḥarām*), he will receive a punishment that is twice as much as the accumulated pleasure, and people will shame him for that, which is another (type of) punishment. If the drink is deemed lawful, then know that gluttony will harm the body.

As for the wife, you should know that being too kind and polite with the one who is pretty is harmful, while being forbearing with the ugly is severely harmful; hence be moderate.

Reflect on the condition of Sultāns! How many people they have murdered unlawfully? How many prohibited actions they have delved into?

Yet, despite all that, they only attained a little of the tangible pleasures and as soon as the clouds of their life break, the regret of missing the good deeds and the onset of punishment will show up.

Truly, there is no better life than being in solitude with knowledge being your only companion and associate. In such a state where one is content with the lawfulness that safeguards his religion without any extravagance or need to compromise one's religion.

In fact, he who lives in this state will wear the garment of glory instead of wearing humiliation in front of this world and its people, and he will have sufficed himself with being content with little when he is unable to have much; thereby safeguarding his religion and his life.

Being busy with learning knowledge will lead him to virtues and admit him into the Gardens; therefore, he saves himself from the [evils of] *Shayṭān*, the Sultān and the laypeople.

This state is only suitable to the learned ones because if the ignorant lived in solitude he will not learn any knowledge and hence will live in confusion.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-FIVE

The Successful Students of Knowledge

I contemplated a situation that made students of knowledge (*tulāb al-ʿilm*) overlook the purpose [of seeking knowledge]; this situation is when they only care for writing and recording notes; especially those who learn the science of ḥadīth.

This process takes most of their life and keeps them away from memorising (*ḥifẓ*) and understanding; leading their life to end while they only know a little of knowledge (*ʿilm*).

Yet the one who was successful, he spends his life in memorising, revision and dedicates the time when he is tired from that in writing and recording; hence he manages to achieve the purpose of learning knowledge. The successful one is he who prioritises and seeks the important because it is impossible for a person to attain all the knowledge in his lifespan.

The majority of sciences are all about understanding because some people acquire some knowledge but overlook implementation, causing all what he learned to be in vain. I seek refuge with Allāh from failure.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-SIX

Investigation and Consultation

There is nothing better to rely on when you intend to do something than investigating it before being involved in it, for when you act without heeding the consequences of something, the result will highly likely end in regret (*nadm*).

This is why we are ordered to seek advice and consult others because when a person investigates a matter, it helps him to think of what may be overlooked.

It was said, 'The yeast of opinion is better than its (subsequent) pie.'

The most reckless is he who acts without seeking consultation or thinking ahead, particularly in matters that provokes one's anger; because acting recklessly in such matters will bring forth either doom or great regret.

How many people are there who murdered or injured others, but when they came to their senses, they lived the rest of their lives in grief, weeping and regret!

In most cases, the murderer ends up being killed, losing in this life and the Hereafter too.

The same applies to the one who hastens to a lustful desire as soon as it presents itself to him while forgetting the consequences of such an action. He too spends his life drinking the bitterness of his regret, let alone the blame and the punishment he shall receive after his death; and all that for what? For a pleasure that lasted momentarily and then passed like the flash of lightening!

So be warned and beware! You should think ahead before delving into any affair and heed the consequences of your actions, especially when in states of anger that cause enmity and divorce.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-SEVEN

Beware of Your Intellect Otherwise it Will Ruin you

I was once asked about the intended meaning of the statement mentioned by some wise men, 'Whoever does not beware of his intellect, his intellect will ruin him.'

I spent a period of time thinking of what it meant without being able to figure it out. I then realised the meaning to be: if you asked your intellect to give you knowledge about the Creator, it will rush to your senses and so it will make you fall in likening Him with His creation; so being wary of an intellect used is to observe and reflect, that will make him understand that He can neither be an object nor similar to anything.

When the intelligent one observes the Action of the Lord, Exalted be He, will realise that some of His Actions are beyond one's reasoning and capacity such as the creation of pain, slaughtering of animals, giving enemies the power over His supporters though He is able to prevent it, inflicting the righteous with hunger, punishing for a little mistake after one is detached from the Lord, and so forth. The intellect perceives in the context of human norms and so cannot realise the wisdom behind them.

In such cases, to beware of the intellect using one's intellect happens when you address your intellect saying: 'Did you not confirm as a fact that He is the All-Sovereign and Most Wise and so He never does something without a reason?' It will answer: 'Yes.'

Then you say to it: 'This is why we avoid your second reasoning based on what you have confirmed in the beginning; hence it becomes evident that you just happen not to realise the wisdom of His actions, therefore you must submit since you know He is the most Wise.'

Many people investigate based on the first type of reasoning; so they objected to the point that the layperson would complain, 'Why did He decree a bad end for me?

Why did He not give me enough provision?

What wisdom is there in inflicting me with all these calamities?'

If he remembers that He is All-Sovereign and Most Wise, he will simply submit and understand that it is him who cannot see the wisdom.

There were a group of arrogant people who relied on their intellect; the first one was *Shaytān* who considered fire more superior to clay therefore he objected.

And I have seen a group of people who were attributed to knowledge and also fell in this trap—they objected and thought that there is no wisdom in some of His actions. All this happened merely because they relied on their intellect in measuring the habits, norms and using the actions of the creation as the basis of their analogy when thinking of the Actions of the Lord.

However, if they could dig out the knowledge of the subtle intellect, that the Creator is confirmed to be the Most Perfect and above contradictions. That He is Most Wise and none of His Actions are without reason, the mind will submit afterwards to what it does not comprehend.

Take the story of [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) with Al-Khidr as an example to reflect on. When Al-Khidr did things that are not within the norms of mankind, [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) objected and forgot that he informed him that he knew the consequences of actions that you are unaware of.

If the wisdom of some actions performed by the created were hidden from [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) then it befits more to understand that there are plenty of wisdoms of the Most Wise that are hidden from us!

This is a fundamental principle that if a person does not hold fast to it. It will make one object and settle in the zone of disbelief (*kufr*). On the other hand, if one holds fast to it he will be at ease whenever a trial befalls him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-EIGHT

I Beseech you by the Grace You have Bestowed upon Me

I was told that a person approached a noble man and said to him, 'I am the one whom you were benevolent to on such and such day.' The noble man replied, 'I welcome he who asks me through reminding me of my deeds.' Then he fulfilled his need.

I saw morality in such a story; so I followed it in my invocations and I said, 'O Lord, you guided me since childhood and preserved me from misguidance, protected me from many sins and inspired me into seeking knowledge. Not because of the virtue of my understanding for I am less than that. You granted me an understanding with which I understood this knowledge and authored about it. You facilitated for me the reasons to encompass such knowledge, and sustained me without me spending any effort or enduring humiliation of asking others, and protected me against my enemies thus no tyrant ever targeted me. You blessed me with types of knowledge that many of your creation did not have. Added to all that having my heart attached to knowing You and loving You. You graced me with uttering the gentle words that lead to You. You made the hearts of people incline towards me to the extent that people rush to me and accept what I say without questioning any of what I say. They even long to hear my words without being bored. You preserved me with secluding me from those whose company is unsuitable. You blessed him with the company of knowledge and your invocation during my privacy. If I ever wanted to count your blessings upon me I would never be able to,

وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعۡمَتَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحۡصُوهَآۗ

> "And if you try to count the blessings of Allāh, you shall never be able to count them."
>
> [*Ibrahim* (14): 34]

Hence, O you who is benevolent to me even before I ask! Do not let me down while I am now asking for. I beseech you through the blessings you have bestowed upon me.'

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-NINE

Being Balanced is Praiseworthy

Exalted is He, Who made the creation stand in between two opposite folds; the ones who are balanced are rare to find!

Among the creation you find those whose anger drives them to injure and kill. Those whose abnormal forbearance made them cold and naive, not feeling anything even when they are verbally abused!

And those whose appetite makes them eat whatever they desire, and those whose abstention makes them deny themselves their rights and so forth.

The praised ones are those who stand in between, balanced and moderate. If someone spends everything he has, he becomes prodigal whereas the miser is he who stashes money and forbids himself from enjoying it. Although it is known that money is just a means to serve a purpose, so when a person spends it recklessly he will eventually be in need of compromising his status, religion and even endure favours of misers upon him—which is inappropriate because it's better to let your enemy inherit you than being in the need from a friend.

On the other hand, some people are stingy and their miserliness comes in different levels; the worst of which is when the miser becomes obsessed with money to the point that some of them may pass away due to their bad diet and lack of nutrition. They do not spend a dime on health and afterwards someone else inherits his wealth leaving him in regret! I was informed of such type of stories that are beyond belief and I will mention some of them so you may take lesson:

There was a trader living in the city of Ṣūr, and he used to buy two pieces of bread and nuts from from a shop. He entered his house around sunset and he put the nut on the fire, giving him light lasting long enough for him to remove his robe; and by the time its shell becomes grilled, he would wipe it on the two breads and eat them. He remained living this lifestyle for a while until he died. The ruler of the city found that this man had thirty thousand in currency!

I saw a man from the well versed people of knowledge, and when he was sick, he stayed at his friend's house without having any person serving him or accompanying him even as he was in great pain. After a while he died and they found that he had five hundred *dinār* hidden between his books!

Abū'l Ḥasan Al-Randsī told me one day that a man I knew got sick, so he called me and I visited him and he said to me, 'The judge sealed my wealth.' so I said, 'If you want I can go now and break the seal to give you a third of it to distribute as you like.'

He said: 'No, by Allāh, I do not wish to distribute it but I want my money to be with me.' I said, 'They will not give it to you [after it was sealed] but I can bring the third of it so you do with it what you want!'

He refused and remained that way until he died and his money was taken!

He also narrated to me that a man came to him and mentioned a weird story. The man said, 'My mother in law became sick so she asked me to buy her *khabisah*.'[212]

So I went and bought her what she asked for and gave it to her while she was lying down in a room and then left. After a while my young son came and told me that she was swallowing the gold! I got up and found her dipping the golden *dinār* in the food I bought her then swallowing it, so I stopped her and admonished her for such behaviour. She said, 'I fear you will marry another woman besides my daughter.' I said, 'I will not do so.' She said: 'swear by Allāh that you will not.' I swore and she handed me the rest of the gold and died afterwards. I buried her and after some months one of our children died and I went to bury him next to her and took with me a big sheet and told the digger to exhume her grave and collect her bones. I then brought them to my house and put them in a basket and poured some water on them until I found around eighty *dinārs* she swallowed.'

A friend of mine told me that a man died and was buried in his house. After some time his grave was opened to move him and found underneath his head a block covered by asphalt. His family was asked about this block so they said that he made it and stated in his will to be buried with him this way and stated that blocks do not last in graves except with asphalt. They carried it away and realised that it was a heavy; so when they broke it they found inside of it nine hundred *dinār*, which the people in charge of heritage took.

I was told there was a man who cleaned the *Masjid* and collected its dust and formed it in bricks. When he was asked about it, he said this was blessed dust which he would like to be buried with him in his grave. When he died, the bricks were put on his grave and some of them were thrown away in the house. When it rained the bricks broke apart and they found out he hid money in them so they went and took the bricks they put on his grave and found them filled with money.

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[212] Type of food made of dates and samin

One of the people I know was a rich person. He was sick but he never told his family of any of his wealth. I am almost certain it was due to his miserliness and love for this life hoping to live long. He never told them where he put his wealth fearing they may take it while he was alive. Indeed, there is no further shame than that!

One of my friends told me a story he witnessed, so he said, 'There was a man who had two sons and one daughter and had one thousand *dinars* that he buried.

When he was extremely sick his family gathered around him so he said to one of his sons, 'Stay and do not leave!'

When he was alone with him he told him, 'your brother is busy playing with birds and your sister is married to a Turk. If they take my money they will spend it in play and amusement. However, you on the other hand live your life the way I do and you have my manners and lifestyle. So I want you to know that I hid one thousand *dinars* it is in a place (he named). If I were to die, take it solely for yourself.' Upon hearing this, the son immediately went away and took the money. After some short time, the father recovered and asked his son to give him back his money but the son refused to do so. Short time late, the son became too sick and his father came begging him to asking him where the money is, reminding him that he favoured him over everyone and imploring him not to be like this, and that he feared that he will die and the money will be lost this way! He kept pleading with him until he told him of the place of the money so the father went and took it. The son later on recovered and went to his father, who had become sick, begging him to direct him to where he hid the money, the father refused until he died and the money was never found!

Exalted is He, who prevented those people from sanity and intellect.

إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَٱلْأَنْعَٰمِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

"They are like animals, in fact they are more misguided."
[*al-Furqān* (25): 44]

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY

Test the One you want to Befriend

I had friends and close companions whose friendship I was proud of; after some time I noticed that they did not fulfil what friendship (*shurūt al-ṣadāqah*) and brotherhood (*ikhwa*) necessitates.

So I started to blame them until I realised a deeper meaning: what benefit does blame have! If they become better afterwards they will act that way to avoid hearing my blame again and not because of the purity of the relationship we have!

I was about to boycott them but decided not to as I realised that people are either acquaintances or friends—as it shows—or true brethren. That being said, it is not the right thing to do to boycott them, I would rather just shift them from the circle of those whom I deem as true brethren to the circle of those whom I deem as mere friends.

If I find they do not befit to be treated according to this circle, I will just move them to the circle of the acquaintances and treat them as such accordingly.

This is because blame brings no benefit and as Yaḥyā Ibn Muʿadh said: 'A brethren whom you need to remind him of yourself when making supplication is indeed a bad brother.'

The majority of people today fall in the category of acquaintances, and to have a friend among them is something rare to find, for having a true brethren is something that no longer exists, so do not have high hopes about it.

In fact, I noticed that the purity of relations cannot be maintained between blood brothers or between the man and his son or wife!

Therefore do not seek what you cannot get, take aside and deal with people like how you deal with strangers!

And beware of being fooled by the affection showed by some people because time will reveal to you the reason behind them showing such affection, which could be just to take advantage of you!

Al-Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyyāḍ said, 'If you want to befriend a person, make him angry and if you find him in such state of manner that pleases you, befriend him.'

This advice today is considered too risky because if you provoke someone, he promptly becomes your enemy because relationships are no longer pure.

The concern of the righteous predecessors was the Hereafter alone, therefore their intentions when building relationships with people, and when having close ties with people were pure (*ṣafā*); hence they acted on basis on religion and not worldly matters. Today however, the love of this life overpowered the hearts, and so if you see he who wears the garment of religion, test him and you shall realise his reality and so stay away from him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-ONE

People Take Things for Granted

I noticed that the healthy person does not realise the value of his health until he becomes sick, and the free does not appreciate his freedom until he is locked up (i.e. becomes occupied).

I realised a very interesting meaning when I pondered the condition of men. When a man has a woman with average beauty, his heart is not attached to her in a joyful manner for two reasons:

Firstly, she is not that pretty and secondly, what one has is often disliked and the self always seeks what it cannot have.

Therefore, sometimes you find the man is bothered and desires another woman while he is unaware that he is after heavy chains restraining his heart from focusing on the affairs of the Hereafter or even any other work or deed in this life.

Thus, he becomes a prisoner of the one whom he is in love with and only thinks of her.

I truly wonder at the free who prefer prison, and the relaxed that prefer tiredness!

If the woman he is married to needs to be protected and preserved, woe to him! He will always be in constant tension and if she was from those who like to show their beauty and whose evilness cannot be assured to be availed, it will ruin him completely because if he sleeps he will not enjoy his sleep and if he leaves his house he will fear she may do something wrong.

If she wanted money beyond his capacity, he will have to be involved in wrong means to manage just to please her, and if she wants sexual intercourse when he is weak that will be indeed his ultimate ruining.

If she dislikes him then this will completely break him down. In fact such a person is like someone who worships an idol.

A man who is married to a wife of average beauty should fear Allāh and discard the whispers of his desires as such whispers and desires will never end.

If he was to fulfil his desires and marry a second one, he will eventually be bored of it and so will start seeking a third one and then become bored and seek a fourth woman and so forth.

In fact, this will only satisfy him in the short run while his heart will remain attached to such desires and live in a shock as his thoughts will be dedicated to thinking of how to have a lover. Hence, when she leaves him or falls sick, he will remain in sorrow or die of sadness eventually.

In contrast, the one who is liked due to her religiosity and content with the one whom he loves makes all the aforesaid trivial.

A person should seek what makes him focused on his Hereafter and to pay no attention to his desires and sexual lust to be safe.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-TWO

Knowledge Necessitates Fearing Allāh

When the knowledge (*'ilm*) of a person is perfected, he does not attribute the achievement to himself but rather acknowledges the grace of Allāh upon him to facilitate this for him. Some of what prevents the intelligent to even see himself as the achiever or even to be proud of such achievements are: he was guided to perform this [good] deed,

وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡإِيمَٰنَ وَزَيَّنَهُۥ فِي قُلُوبِكُمۡ

> "...but Allāh has endeared the faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts."
>
> [*al-Hujārāt* (49: 7)]

If good deeds he performed was compared to the blessings [Allāh bestowed upon him] he will not even fulfil a fraction of them, and when realising the greatness of the One he served, he will disparage his deeds and worship—that is if he is assuming his worship and deeds are free of defects or heedlessness (*ghafla*).

Thus being in a state of heedlessness, he should beware of His response and be concerned of the blame he may receive for shortcomings and so should overlook whatever achievements he may have.

You should ponder the state of those who are superior; the Angels who exalt and worship Him all day and all night without any shortcomings in what they do, said, "we did not worship you the rightful worship we were supposed to do, and [Prophet] Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*), the one whom Allāh called His *Khalīl*, said:

وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَطۡمَعُ أَن يَغۡفِرَ لِى خَطِيٓـَٔتِى يَوۡمَ ٱلدِّينِ

> "And Who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Recompense, (the Day of Resurrection)."
>
> [*al-Shuarā'* (26): 82]

And there is no clearer evidence then when he patiently overcame the trial of being thrown in fire and willingly accepting to hand his own son to be sacrificed. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "None of you shall be saved due to his good deeds!" The Companions asked: 'Even you?' He said: "Even me unless that Allāh engulfs me with His Mercy."[213]

It is reported that Abū Bakr (*radiyAllāhu 'anh*u) said to the Prophet (ﷺ), "My wealth and myself are all for you, O Messenger of Allāh!"

And 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, 'If I had all what is on earth, I would have sacrificed it to avoid the terror [after death] before I come to know of it.'

And Ibn Mas'ūd (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, 'I wish I would not be resurrected after I die.'

While 'Ā'ishah (*radiyAllāhu 'anhā*) used to say, 'I wish I was totally forgotten.'

And that is the case of all the pious intelligent ones, so may Allāh be pleased with all of them.

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[213] Bukhārī, #5673 and Muslim, #2816

It was reported from a group of righteous people from the children of Isrā'īl that indicated their lack of understanding about what I have just explained because they noticed their deeds [instead of noticing the grace of Allāh upon them that guided them to do their good deeds]. They acted as if they did a favour with all of that; among such reports is the story of the worshipper who worshipped Allāh for five hundred years on an island and gave away in charity a pomegranate every night and asked Allāh to take his soul while he is prostrating to Him. And when he was resurrected, Allāh told him, "Enter Paradise by My Mercy" but he objected and said, "I want to enter it by my deeds," so all his deeds were gathered and weighted against one of the graces of Allāh upon him and yet his deeds weighted less, so then he said, "O my Lord! I enter it by your Mercy!"[214]

The same is the case of the people who were locked in the cave as one of them interceded with a deed that he should be ashamed of mentioning as he intended to fornicate but then he feared on himself the punishment of fornication so he abandoned it!

O I wonder! What favour he shows when he stopped doing a deed because he feared the punishment?[215]

If it was a lawful deed that he avoided, I would understand! But, if he could understand the shame of his low endeavour, it would have occupied him from humiliation as [Prophet] Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) said,

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[214] *Mustadrak* Al-Ḥākim, 4/250

[215] Bukhārī, #3340

﴿ وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفۡسِيٓۚ إِنَّ ٱلنَّفۡسَ لَأَمَّارَةُۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ
رَبِّيٓۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ﴿٥٣﴾

> "And I free not myself (from the blame). Verily, the (human) self is inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His Mercy (upon whom He wills). Verily, my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."
>
> [*Yusuf* (12): 53]

While the other one let his children suffer hunger until dawn just so he could let his parents drink, though what he did was harmful to the children, but indeed understanding is rare to find! Their actions seem as if they were saying they did well; grant us what we ask, as if they are asking for the reward of what they did.[216]

If sound understanding was not rare to find, you would have not found a person who thinks of himself as being superior over those of his kind, and you would have found the more perfect ones fearful of belittling their own deeds, as they fear not showing enough gratitude to thank Allāh for what He favoured them with.

This understanding will bring the head of arrogance to the floor and force people to show humility [before their Lord]; this you should contemplate as it is a fundamental principle.

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[216] [TN]: The morality that Ibn al-Jazwī was trying to show that we tend to be proud of what appears as good deeds. While in fact we do it because of our fear of the punishment and not because we do it out of love and appreciation to our Lord, and fulfill our duties to Him.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-THREE

Fearing Allāh after Repenting

The intelligent one should be in constant fear (*kawf*) of his sins, even if he repented from them and wept over them.

I notice that most people rely on the acceptance of their repentance as if they are certain of it. This is a matter that is left untold to us, and even if they were forgiven the shame of committing such sins will still remain.

This principle of fearing Allāh from sins even after they are repented from, is what was reported in the Two Ṣaḥīḥs that [on the Day of Resurrection] people will come to [Prophet] Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) asking him to intercede for them but he excuses himself with saying, 'my sin!" And the same happens when they turn to [Prophet] Nūḥ, [Prophet] Ibrāhīm, [Prophet] Mūsā and [Prophet] 'Īsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) as all of them will apologise for the same reason.[217]

The sins of these Prophets were not in fact actual sins by definition, and were repented from yet they showed regret and were still in fear because of that.

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[217] Bukhārī and Muslim, #194 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

The shame of sins after repentance is accepted does not completely vanish, and how beautiful is the statement of Al Fuḍayl Ibn Iyyaḍ who said, 'I am so ashamed in front of You! Even if You forgave my sin!'

I so wonder at those who favour sins and prefer the joy of a moment that will leave him with endless regret that never departs the heart of a believer, even if he is forgiven for it.

Beware! Beware of all that brings forth shame!

Indeed this is a matter that only a few ascetics and those who repent would consider or heed, for they think that forgiveness covers their sins with their sincere repentance! And what I have just mentioned necessitates constant caution and shame.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-FOUR

We Seek Refuge with Allāh from Having Faulty Understanding

We seek refuge from Allāh from having a faulty understanding, particularly in the case of those who are considered from the people of knowledge.

Imām Aḥmad recorded in his *Musnad* that Abū 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān al-Sulamī disputed with Ḥayyān Ibn 'Abdullāh. The former said to Hayyān, 'I know what encouraged your friend (i.e. 'Ali Ibn Abī Ṭālib)' Hayyaan asked, 'What is that?'

He said, 'The statement of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said, "Allāh may have looked at the people who fought in the Battle of Badr and said, "Do whatever you like for I have forgiven you."'[218]

This statement shows the faulty understanding of Abū 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān concerning the subject matter as he thought the motive of 'Ali for taking part in the fighting was his reliance on being forgiven!

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[218] Bukhārī, #3007 and Muslim, #2494 on the authority of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy-Allāhu 'anhu*)

It is noteworthy for everyone to understand that the meaning of the said ḥadīth is that: regardless of what sins you may have committed in your past, all are now forgiven.

As for forgiving what is yet to come that is not part of it. Is it not obvious that they will be held accountable if any one of them disbelieved afterwards—and none have as they are above that—since they are not infallible? The same applies to sins too.

And, even if we hypothetically assume its meaning includes future sins, it would mean in such a case that you will eventually be forgiven.

Apart from the meaning of the ḥadīth, how can a Muslim think that the chief of believers, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) fought because he was counting on being forgiven?

He is above such behaviour for he fought relying on evidence while being forced to take the fight; hence he was upon the truth and all scholars agree that the truth was with 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) in all his fights and battles!

How could it be otherwise when the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: "O Allāh, let the truth be with him wherever he goes."[219]

It becomes obvious that Abū 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān made a seriously ugly mistake that was driven by the fact he was from the alleged supporters of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

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[219] Tirmidhī, #3714 on the authority of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*). It is weak see *Da'īf al-Tirmidhī*

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-FIVE

Asceticism without Sincerity

I thought of some things that indicate hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and insincerity (*riyā'*) of the ascetics of this era, even while they claim sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*).

They remain in a sanctuary [where they spend their time worshiping] and never visit a friend or check on a sick person because they claim they want to be far from people and dedicate all their time to worship (*'ibādah*), when in fact, they want to be known and pointed out as those who detached themselves from people to worship.

This is because if they did not do that, no one will show the respect they show to them while they are in such a position.

The behaviour of people before was nothing like what those people do! The Prophet (ﷺ) used to visit the sick and buy his needs from the market. Abū Bakr (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) used to trade with silk and Abū 'Ubaydah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) and Abū Ṭalḥah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) used to dig graves, and Ibn Sirīn used to wash and shroud dead people and none of them were into the business of standing out to be known.

In contrast, those people in our time remain silent in the presence of people and try being more touched and attentive as if they are about to die. Indeed, this is nothing but hypocrisy!

Ibn Sirīn used to laugh while he is among people during the day, but when he was [alone] at night he would weep and cry.

Among those whom we criticised, are some who show people they fast every day as they are nourished with hearing people say they do not miss a day of fasting! These idiots do not seem to know they fast for the sake of people otherwise they would have shown people they do not fast for a couple of days and thus lose the adage of such a reputation; then they could start fasting again.

Ibrāhim ibn Adham used to keep next to him the food eaten by healthy people when he is sick [so people do not know].

I saw some of the so called ascetics in our time who lead people in the Prayer of *Fajr* and recite the last two *Surahs* of the Qur'ān in order to give the impression that they have completed the recital of Qur'ān!

Truly, this type of deed is explicitly hypocritical and insincere. Some other ascetics receive charity even though they are in no need, and furthermore they do not mind whether such money is given by good people or oppressors. They approach rulers begging for money though they know that the source of their money is unlawful.

It is critical to rectify the intentions and maintain sincerity, for otherwise most of these deeds are rejected.

Mālik Ibn Dinār used to say, 'If a person is insincere let him not waste his time and effort.'

If only the insincere realised that whatever he intends to achieve—which is having the attention and love of people—is something he does not achieve because of his insincerity.

This is because it deprives him from people's love and keeps them away from him, whereas the sincere is loved. In fact, if the pretentious realises that the hearts of those for whom he shows off his deeds are in the Hand of the One whom he disobeys, he would never have become as such.

I saw many people who wear the clothing of wool and manifest worship but none pays attention to him, whereas I saw some who wear good clothes and smile to people and people love him.

I ask Allāh to grant us sincerity whereby we can be saved and I seek His refuge from pretentiousness that nullifies our deeds.

Truly, He is the most capable of answering such a prayer.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-SIX

The Worldly Life is a Place of Trial

It is ignorance (*jahl*) that a person remains unaware of the purpose for which he was created, for it is designed to be the opposite of his wants.

The intelligent one should be settled and content when his wants remain unfulfilled (i.e. when he invokes Allāh to fulfil what he wants), he actually worships Him through invoking Him; so if he is granted his wish, he should praise Him—and if not, he should be insistent in continuing to ask for what he wants[220] because this life was not created in order for mankind's needs can fulfilled.

Rather, he should remind himself with the verse,

وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تَكۡرَهُواْ شَيۡـٔٗا وَهُوَ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ

"You may dislike a matter while in fact it is good for you."
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 216]

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[220] He refers to the fact that people should realise that sometimes seeking what Allāh keeps away from them is to protect them while they insist on it as they cannot see the harm. It is to direct people to submit to the divine decree when we do not find our prayers are being answered.

In fact, it is a greater ignorance to be discontent in his heart about not having his wants fulfilled or facilitated. This is because some people may object in his heart [to what Allāh has decreed] or may even say, 'I do not find any harm in having my wants fulfilled and yet my supplication is not answered.'

The aforesaid behaviour and attitude is proof of the ignorance and lack of faith (*qila al-īmān*) and submission of such a person to Allāh's wisdom (*ḥikmah*).

It is almost impossible to find a person whose wish was fulfilled and yet did not endure discomfort afterwards.

Our father Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) lavished in the Heavens and afterwards he was removed from it.

Nūḥ (*'alayhi as-salām*) asked Allāh to protect his son from drowning and his wish was not granted.

[Prophet] Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) was trialled with being thrown in fire (*nār*), and [Prophet] Ismā'īl (*'alayhi as-salām*) was trialled with being prepared to be slaughtered. [Prophet] Ya'qūb ('alayhi as-salām) was tested with losing his children and Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) endured resisting desires (*mujahadat al-hawā*). [Prophet] Ayyūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) was tested in sickness (*bilā'*) and [Prophet] Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) and [Prophet] Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) were tested in tribulation (*fitnah*). All Prophets (*'alayhi as-salām*) experienced similar tests; as for the tests of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), the calamities of hunger (*jū'*) and a hard life are readily known.

This is because life is designed to be a place for trials; therefore the intelligent one should train himself with patience (*ṣabr*) and understand that if a wish is granted then it is a grace (*luṭf*), and what was not granted is because this is the normal thing to happen in life.

In such situations, the strength (*quwa*) and weakness (*da'f*) of faith (*īmān*) manifests. Thus, in order to overcome this sickness (*marad*), the believer should take the medicine (*adwiyya*) of submitting to the will of the Lord (*taslīm li'l-Mālik*) and accepting the Judgment (*taḥkīm li'l-ḥukm*) of His wisdom. To further remind himself what Allāh said to the leader of creation, his Prophet (ﷺ),

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ ٱلْأَمْرِ شَىْءٌ

"You have nothing in your hand..."
[*Āl-'Imrān* (3): 128]

Then he should mitigate the effect of what he feels by knowing that Allāh did not withhold his wish from being fulfilled because of miserliness (*bukhl*), but rather due to a benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) that he is unaware of.

It is partly to reward the patient, increase their status, distinguish those who submitted and were pleased from those who did not. He should understand that the time of trials is short and the sought after wants are saved for another time. Then the darkness that engulfed him will break away and the dawn of reward will shine instead.

He whose understanding advances to the level at which he becomes able to know that not being given what he wants is something that Allāh, Exalted be He, purposely intended, his faith will make his wants to be according to what Allāh wants and ensures his pleasure to receive whatever Allāh decrees for him. This is because if he was otherwise, he would deviate from the true essence of slavery (*ḥaqīqa al-'ubudiyya*) to Allāh.

In fact, this is a fundamental principle that every person should heed and apply in every case when what happens is the opposite of what he wished for.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-SEVEN

Warning the Scholars from Mingling with Rulers

I noticed that many scholars (*'ulamā'*) and story tellers (*quṣṣas*) rush to rulers whenever they endure a financial hardship in the hope that they may receive some monetary assistance though they know very well that they hardly fulfil the rights of the money they earn and that what they earn is often unlawful.

This is because most of them give away the tax money [paid by the lands conquered peacefully] to a poet instead of spending this money in its rightful purpose.

Sometimes they would pay a solider whose monthly wage was ten *dinārs* the amount of ten thousand *dinārs*.

And if he participates in a battle they would take away what should be spent on the army! Let alone the injustice that happens while dealing with people.

The first negative effect that the scholar experiences, is that he is deprived of benefiting from the knowledge he acquired. One pious man once saw a scholar stepping out the house of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī[221] so he said, 'I take refuge with Allāh from a knowledge (*'ilm*) that brings no benefit.'

This is because he did not denounce the wrongdoings he saw and accepted to eat from their food that they earned unlawfully. The result of all that is that his heart becomes sealed and he becomes deprived from enjoying the sweetness of dealing with Allāh, Exalted be He; hence no one can be guided through him! Worse still, his action can be a reason for misguiding people and preventing them from taking him as a role model. In fact, not only does he harm himself but he harms his ruler too because the ruler would say to himself, 'If I was doing anything wrong, this scholar would not have accompanied me and he would have advised me.'

The harm exceeds to reach the common people because being in the company of the prince would give them the impression that the ruler is not doing anything wrong or that being in his company without denying any of his wrongdoing is permissible, or even to make them more inclined to this worldly life! Truly, there is no goodness in a life of pleasures that makes the path to the Hereafter narrow.

I sacrifice my life for those who endured their thirst for worldly pleasures and abandoned their desires during their life until they extinguished this thirst after death drinking the drink of pleasure. Indeed, their memories remain to be told to water the thirsty hearts, and to polish their rust.

Imām Aḥmad was in need and so he wanted to trade and never accepted the help of any ruler.

Ibrāhīm al-Harbī used to eat peas and despite that when the Caliph al-Mutadid sent him one thousand *dinārs*, he rejected them.

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[221] Famous esteemed minister in the time of Abbasids who was known of his firmness and sensibility

Bishr al-Hāfī used to suffer hunger and when he was told to make soup of wheat he would say, 'I fear Allāh will ask me: 'from where did you earn this wheat?"

The memory of these people remain as the time of their patience (*ṣabr*) is like the time of a short nap whereas the religion of their opponents becomes weak and the pleasures of those who sought concessions vanished along with their bodies.

O you who was guided to success, be patient and do not be jealous of those whose worldly life was bountiful because if you contemplate their bountiful life you will realise that it is tight and narrow in the eyes of religion. Hence, do not seek concessions through interpreting [texts and situations] because your lifetime in this world is short.

That said, when '*the self*' (*nafs*) is disturbed due to its lack of patience (*qila al-ṣabr*), you should narrate to it the stories of the righteous ascetics (*zuhhād*). As that should discipline it, make it reflect and be ashamed of what it intends to do if it has any portion of determination and an awakened heart.

Exemplify also to it the case of 'Alī Ibn al-Madīnī who accepted the gifted money of Ibn Abī Dāwūd, and the case of Aḥmad who remained patient then observed the difference between the two persons and what news was reported about each and what each one is remembered with...Indeed, Ibn al-Madīnī will be in regret when Aḥmad says to him, 'I safeguarded my religion.'

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-EIGHT

Majority of People have Deviated from their True State of Servitude (*'ubudiyya*) to Allāh

When I pondered on the condition of people I noticed that the majority of people are outside the fold of their servitude (*'ubudiyya*) to Allāh.[222]

The majority of rulers acquire money from unlawful sources, and then spend it in an inappropriate manner, handling such money as if it is their own wealth and not Allāh's.

They go to battles under His Name but when they collect the spoils of war, they take it for themselves and grant it to their friends as they like.

The scholars whose poverty is severe and whose desires are strong agree with such actions and participate in their deeds.

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[222] i.e. if they perform an act of worship they do it out of habit or only when it does not contradict their wants and desires in the level that may hurt their hearts.

Traders involve invalid contracts while laypeople indulge in sins and neglect the laws of Islām; if their wants are not answered they may say, 'We are no longer interested in praying!'

Indeed, may Allāh never grant such types of people as they also do not pay the charity (*ẓakat*) and abandon ordering people to do good (*amr bi'l-ma'rūf*). Some people's punishments are postponed (*ta'khīr al-'aqūba*), hence they become deceived, while some people rely on being forgiven (*'afū*) and the majority of people have fragile faith (*mutaẓalẓal al-īmān*).

I ask Allāh to let us die as Muslims.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-NINE

The Outcome of Good Patience is Goodness

It is remarkable to find a person supporting a family of his own and does not compromise his piety and religion when enduring a financial hardship.

This is because the example of the one who has a family to support is like water, when it splashes it closes and starts working from within endeavouring to open a hole.

The same is the case with the person with a family who seeks all means to provide income when he lacks money. If he is incapable of earning money from lawful sources he would accept to earn it from suspicious sources and if his religion becomes weak he would not mind earning it from unlawful sources.

However, when the believer knows he is unable to earn money, he would postpone marriage. If he was married and had children, he would reduce his expenditure and be content (*qanā'a*) with the little he earns.

As for those who have no source of income such as scholars (*'ulamā'*) and ascetics (*mutazahidūn*), their safety is at stake because they neither receive aid from rulers nor are looked after by the people; hence when members of their households increase they no longer can be safe from experiencing what ignorant people experience too.

If they are able to ensure a source of income, they should work hard while reducing their expenses and be content with little they have because if any of them compromise their principles, they will earn money that is unlawful for they will take money from oppressors using the excuse of being ascetics.

And if they have wealth they should endeavour to maintain and grow it because people today neither give loans nor help, and most people if not all, seem to be as if they worship money.

Preserving the wealth leads to preserving the religion and they should not pay attention to the advice of the ignorant who advises giving away their wealth because this is inappropriate to do at this time.

You should know that if a person is distracted from the Hereafter with this life, he will neither acquire knowledge (*'ilm*) nor perform good deeds (*'aml*) nor occupy his mind contemplating (*fikr*) the greatness (*'azma*) of Allāh.

The people before used to ensure they are not distracted through taking many means, most of which were that they used to receive financial support from *Baytul-Māl* on an annual basis, and such support used to reach them and cover their expenses.

Some of them had a trade such as Sa'īd Ibn al-Mūsāyyib, Sufyān al-Thawrī and 'Abdullāh Ibn al-Mubārak whose focus on the Hereafter was not distracted at all.

Sufyān used to say to his wealth, 'was it not for you, they would have mocked and used me!'

When 'Abdullāh Ibn al-Mubārak lost his goods he cried and said, 'These goods used to help me maintain my religion [i.e. help me from compromising my religion because of my need].'

And some people used to accept assistance of some brothers who used to show no favour on them for doing so.

Ibn al Mubārak used to send money to Al-Fuḍayl and others. Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd used to check on the senior scholars so he once sent to Mālik a thousand *dinār* and Ibn Luhay'a thousand *dinār* and gave Manṣūr Ibn Ammar thousand *dinār* and a servant three hundred *dinār.*

People remained behaving with such etiquette until it came to an end (i.e. the allocations provided by rulers have become little and those who look after their close friends and scholars are just too few).

Despite the small aid provided, it used to help protect the religion and honour of people at that time. In contrasting today, the hands of people have shrunk to the point that only a few actually give the alms.

It is nevertheless farfetched to imagine that scholars and ascetics, who work day and night to earn their sustenance, dedicate their time for their Hereafter when they are unable to find the time for it! This situation made them approach rulers and accept what is improper and made ascetics become pretentious in order to receive worldly benefits. Hence, beware if you wish to safeguard your religion! I have already advised you repeatedly to little your efforts and minimise your relations with people as much as possible, and keep some savings as such savings will help you safeguard your religion so understand what I have just explained.

If your *'self'* becomes bothered with such a condition as it longs to attain what it desires, say to it, 'if you believe then be patient and if you only want to attain what compromises the religion, then know what you seek will not benefit you; think of those learned people who collected wealth from unlawful ways, and the pretentious ones who showed piety and lost their Hereafter and worldly life!'

On the other hand, think of the sincere ones such as Aḥmad and Bishr whose memory and remembrance remained virtuous despite the passing of time since then. To recap,

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَرْزُقْهُ
مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
بَٰلِغُ أَمْرِهِۦ ۚ قَدْ جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾

> "And whoever fears Allāh—He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allāh—then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allāh will accomplish His purpose. Allāh has already set for everything a [decreed] extent."
>
> [*al-Talāq* (65): 2-3]

The provision of Allāh can be facilitated for a person in return for being patient with hardships (*sabr al-balā'*). Keep in mind that days pass by and the reward of good patience (*sabr al-jamīl*) is nothing but good.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY

Being Kind to the Wife is from Manhood

A man came to me complaining about holding his wife in scorn and then said, 'Though I dislike her but I cannot leave her [i.e. divorce her] for many reasons, some of which are: I am indebted to her [for a large sum of money], let alone that I am an impatient person and so I often express my contempt and from a few words I say, she can notice that I dislike her.'

I said to him, 'This will not work out as the house should be entered through its door! You should spend some time alone to contemplate about what happens to you, as only then will you realise that Allāh trials you with such a person because of your sins; hence you need to excessively repent and seek Allāh's forgiveness.'

In fact, you should know that you are in the state of a trial and hence you shall be rewarded if you are patient;

وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تَكْرَهُوا۟
شَيْـًٔا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تُحِبُّوا۟ شَيْـًٔا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ
وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١٦﴾

> "But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allāh Knows, while you know not."
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2): 216]

Thus, meet the trials Allāh destined for you with patience (*sabr*) and ask Him for ease because by combining seeking Allāh's forgiveness (*istighfār*), repenting (*tawbah*) from sins (*dhunūb*) and being patient on the trials (*sabr 'alā al-qaḍā'*) that befall you and asking Allāh for ease (*sawāl al-farj*), will assure you the reward of three acts of worship (*'ibādah*).

That said, you should not waste a moment in a matter that brings no benefit therefore do not consider thinking you are able to ward off fate,

وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ ٱللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُۥٓ إِلَّا هُوَ

> "And if Allāh should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him."
>
> [*al-An'ām* (6):17]

I have relayed the story of the soldier who once came to the house of Abū Yazeed [to arrest him] and when, Abū Yazeed arrived and saw him in his house, he told one of his companions to remove a particular soft mud block in his house as it was received from a doubtful source. Upon removing the said block, the soldier left the house. Therefore your attempts to harm the woman [i.e. the wife] are inappropriate because she is a test that Allāh sent upon you. You should busy yourself with something else.

It was reported that when one of the righteous predecessors was verbally abused by a man, he placed his cheek on the floor and said: 'O Allāh! Forgive me the sin that caused you to test me with this man!'

The man responded, 'Though she overly loves me and excessively

looks after me, detesting (*bughd*) her is profound in my nature.'
I said, 'Be patient with her and Allāh shall reward you accordingly.'

Abū 'Uthmān al-Naysabūrī was asked, 'What is the best deed you hope to be rewarded for?' He said, 'When I was a young man, my family decided to get me married but I kept refusing.'

One day, a woman approached me and said, 'O Abū 'Uthmān, I am in love with you and I ask you, by Allāh, to marry me!' [I complied with her request and so] I called her father—who was a poor man—and proposed. After we were wed, she entered upon me and I saw that she was a one-eyed limp deformed woman. And because of the amount of love she had for me, I was not able to leave the house, so I stayed with her at home just to please her and I never showed her any feelings of resentment, all the while, I disliked her and being with her felt like sitting on burning embers. I remained living this way and concealing my feelings during her life for 15 years. Truly, I find keeping her happy and pleased all that time is the best good deed I hope to be rewarded for.'

I continued to with the man, 'This is indeed a quality of manhood! I do not know what benefit lies in showing resentment and complaining! To overcome this state you need to follow the advice I have just offered you and so be patient, repent and beseech ease.

And, keep in mind that what you endure is a punishment for previous sins you have committed and as a result, your questioning [and reckoning on the Day of Judgment] will be less difficult; hence use patience to overcome the trial as it is an act of worship.

Endeavour to show affection to her, and if you do not have it in your heart, then keep showing it (outwardly). It is not the chained who has the burden of sin to be blamed for.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-ONE

He who Seeks to Dedicate Himself for the Hereafter Needs Solitude (*'uzla*)

There is no doubt that a heart believing (*qalb al-mu'min*) in Allāh, Exalted be He, and His Commands needs to devote itself to His remembrance (*dhikr*), worship (*'ibādah*) and obedience (*ta'āt*) that requires dedicating oneself to work for the Hereafter.

For it is enough to know that the innate desirous nature (*tab'*) of humans distracts one from realising this goal.

A person should focus his efforts on the Hereafter, devote his heart for the remembrance of Allāh, Most High. Implementing His Orders and for preparing to meet Him.

Hence, one should detach himself from all distractions and avoid being busy with other matters; however, as it is not possible to avoid all distractions, one should avoid and abstain from things that can be avoided.

I never found more distracting to the heart than two things:

The first is obeying one's desirous self in all that it seeks, which is endless for it will ruin one's life and Hereafter. As it is impossible for a person to acquire all what he wants (i.e. pretty women, money, power etc.) then truly, what a distraction! Life goes away while a person only achieves some of that!

The second is socialising with people—the common in particular—and walking in markets because the innate nature of humans inclines towards desires and forgets about the fact it will depart this life. It enjoys not performing any acts of worship and prefers idleness, inadvertency and comfort.

That being the case, he who is accustomed to socialising with people will find that busying himself in learning knowledge or worshipping is something intolerable; so with his continued socialising he finds himself comfortable (*rāḥa*) with this state of heedlessness (*ghafla*) and wasting away his time in nothingness.

He who wants to devote himself to the Hereafter should seek solitude (*'uzla*) so he does not hear the voices of distraction and keep his heart empty from it. His self finds no desire to take as a friend, one who reminds it of what it desires.

Yet if socialising becomes necessary with people, he should keep his interaction minimal and as required, just like how a frog leaves water for a short moment to feel the air then returns to water.

Truly, this is the path of safety so ponder on the benefits of this path and you shall enjoy it.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-TWO

Do Not Curse Time (*al-dahr*)

I have not witnessed any calamity befalling people more severe than people blaspheming and damning time (*dahr*)!

This behaviour was known during the pre-Islāmic (*jahilliya*) period but afterwards the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade people from abusing time; saying, “Do not curse time, for Allāh is time.”[223]

Meaning: you blaspheme and abuse time thinking it is what departed you from each other, and made your parents die, while in fact it is Allāh who controls all that.

I wondered how to teach the ones suffering illnesses [in their hearts] about this when they are upon what the people of pre-Islām (*jahilliyah*) were following. To the point where some of their assumingly intelligent people would spend all their time damning and cursing time! It can even get worse and they attribute to this worldly life what is of Allāh’s; so they say for example: ‘this life did such and such!’

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[223] Bukhārī, #4826 and Muslim, #2246 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ‘anhu*)

I saw many people believe themselves to be jurists and intelligent and yet they err and make such statements! This is because if their condemning statements intended to refer to the passage of time, then it cannot be blamed as it does not have a free will or a purpose or even distinguishes right from wrong for it is controlled not a controller, directed not directing anything.

An intelligent person should not indicate that the condemned; the misjudging and the deviating from guidance, is time! Yet those people deviated from the rope of Islām and attributed these ugly matters to the Creator and believed His Wisdom is defected and His Actions are incorrect just like how *Shaytān* believed he is better than Adam.

That being the case, neither believing in Islām nor prayer may help these types of people who happen to be more evil than disbelievers.

May Allāh not rectify their affairs or guide them!

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-THREE

The Increase of Reward in the Hereafter Depends on the Deeds in this Life

From what surprises me is to find in myself and others the ability to overlook what we have at hand despite our knowledge that life is too short, and that the reward in the Hereafter depends on the deeds performed in this worldly life.

I call upon mankind to realise that their life is too short to take advantage of the two days of *Minā* and wait for the hour of walking to [to the mountain of *'Arafāt*].

Beware of busying your heart with other than the purpose for which it was created. Force yourself to endure bitterness and subdue it if it refuses.

Do not let loose the rope because you live in a grazing land. It is inappropriate for a person standing in the frontline of a battle to busy himself with other than the battle he is in.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-FOUR

Keep the Secret

In this book, I repeatedly made reference to the order of keeping the secret and warned against talking freely [about whatsoever] in the presence of people.

This is because a person may speak against a person, be it a friend or a ruler, in front of a person he assumes to be his friend and act as if he does not care; and as a result of which it becomes the reason for his destruction.

That said, I advise the one whose heart is pure towards other people not to assume all people are good and to be careful from people. Beware of mentioning in front of them anything against anyone, and not to be fooled with those who pretend to be religious or friendly because evil has prevailed.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-FIVE

The Habits of the Vigilant

I contemplated the acts of worship (*'ibādāt*) of most people and realised them to be habitual (*'ādāt*).

Whereas the habits of the vigilant (*yaqẓa*) are the true acts of worship (*'ibādah ḥaqīqa*)[224] and the excitement of such thoughts (*fikr*) overwhelms him and consequently he says: "*Subḥān Allāh*!"[225]

If a person is to thoughtfully contemplate a pomegranate; notice the arranging of its seeds, how the membrane preserves it to avert its size reduction, and the existence of its juicy liquid on the seed, and the placement of the membrane on it to protect it—and if a person is to contemplate the image of the chick in the egg, and the human in the womb of his mother and so forth: his thoughts will hasten him to the exaltation of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), and therefore he says, '*Subḥān Allāh*!'

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[224] i.e. the heedless says *SubḥanAllāh* [i.e. Truly Allāh is perfect, free of errors and defects] out of habit whereas the heedful ponders the wonders of the creations or the greatness of the Creator.

[225] Truly Allāh is perfect, free of errors and defects

The fruit (*thamra*) of this thoughtful contemplation is this *tasbīh*, which is the *tasbīh* of the vigilant whose thoughts still wander around until their *tasbīh* is uttered with certainty.

The vigilant also think of the ugliness of preceding sins that have been committed, which propels his inner soul (*nafs*) and disturbs his heart (*qalb*) and the feelings of regret (*nadm*). The fruit of these agitated emotions is to say, "O Allāh, forgive my sins!"

Truly, this is the true repentance (*istighfār*) and *tasbīh* whereas the heedless (*ghafla*) say all that out of habit.

Indeed, the difference between the two is evident and great.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-SIX

Devoting Oneself to the Hereafter cannot be except through Solitude

For a person to be preoccupied with worship and the Hereafter and be able to practice asceticism (*zuhd*) without enduring any form of distraction, he has to be in solitude (*'uzla*). He needs to avoid observing people and hearing their words except in times of necessity such as attending the congregational and Friday prayers.

Nevertheless, he should practice cautiousness to avoid people during these hours even if he is a scholar who wants to benefit them; in such cases he should assign specific hours [to teach them] while ensuring caution when talking with them.

As for those who walk in the market places of today to buy and sell in this defiled world, and witness wrongdoings and abhorred actions, they return home with darkened hearts.

The outings of the devotee should be to the vast desert or graveyards.

A group of the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) used to buy and sell while being cautious, and still could not overcome the distractions of this worldly life until they opted for solitude.

Abū'l Darda' said, 'I practiced both acts of worship and trade (business); but they did not conform to each other, hence I preferred worship.'

It was reported in the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Market places distract [people from worship] and invalidate [good deeds]."[226]

That being the case, whoever is capable of following the said beneficial diet and has to mix with people and work to earn his family's provision, he should be extremely cautious just like a person walking cautiously over thorns seeking his safety.

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[226] Bukhārī, #2062 and Muslim, #2154 on the authority of 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-SEVEN

Piety is the Vein of Life in Good Hearts

Whoever was endowed with a good heart (*qalb ṭayyib*) and the sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) of invoking Allāh in secret (*khawla*) should mind his state and beware of change because the lasting of this state depends on the continuality of his piety (*taqwā*).

I was blessed with a good heart and invoking Allāh in privacy, but one day some of the high ranked people in this life invited me to a feast they prepared, and I could not refuse the invitation. I ate and I ate from their food, however ever since, I endured some hardships and received my punishment immediately. I remained in such a state of disturbance for a while. This made me become furious about the state of my heart, and I lost the pleasure of worship that I used to feel prior to that incident.

So I said to myself, 'I wonder to what this action lead me to, though I accepted that invitation unwillingly and I was in the position of the one who is compelled to do what he does not want to!'

Upon giving it more thought I realised that I could have overcome the situation by sufficing with a few bites, but my interpretation of the situation caused me to eat the food with appetite and so I ate more than I should have!

My desirous *'self'* argued, 'On what basis do you practice caution when you have no evidence that the food you ate was from unlawful source?'

My vigilant *'self'* responded, 'But where is the fear from the doubtful?'

I came to realise that when I ate a mouthful because of my interpretation and encouraged it with my innate desirous nature, I endured the worst of bitterness i.e. the loss of the heart:

فَٱعْتَبِرُوا يَٰٓأُولِي ٱلْأَبْصَٰرِ ﴿٢﴾

"O people of vision, take warning."

[*al-Ḥashr* (59):2]

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-EIGHT

The Religious Zeal of the Believer is for the Hereafter

The religious zeal of the believer [for worship] is linked to the Hereafter, for everything in this world encourages him to remember the Hereafter. This is because whoever is occupied with a matter, his endeavours will be dedicated to serve what is of his interest.

Do you not see that if labourers were to enter an inhabited house, each one of them will notice what he is concerned with, i.e. the draper will check out the furniture and attempt to estimate its value, the carpenter will check out the roof, the constructor will check out the walls, and the weaver will check out the woven fabrics.

As for the believer, if he sees darkness he remembers the darkness of the grave, and if he experiences pain he remembers the punishment in the Hereafter, and if he hears a terrifying sound, he remembers the blowing of the horn on the Day of Judgment. If he sees the people asleep, he remembers the dead in the graves, and if he sees delight (pleasure) he remembers Paradise; for his religious zeal is bound to what is in the Hereafter, therefore he is preoccupied from everything else.

The greatest of all that he imagines is that he imagines the eternal bliss of Paradise, and that his dwelling will never cease and he will neither be anxious nor disturbed forever more.

Imagining himself basking in these everlasting pleasures that do not perish, makes him overwhelmed and overjoyed; making the obstacles he finds in the way leading him to Paradise bearable and easy to handle—such as pain, illness, tribulation, the loss a loved one, the attack of death and experiencing anguishes.

Longing to visit the *Kab'ah* makes the traveller mind not the plentiful sands in the way, and the one who yearns for good health does not mind the bitterness of medicine because such a person knows that the quality of the fruit depends on the quality of the seed, hence he chooses the best of seeds and takes advantage of the fertile season [i.e. his youth] without showing any tepidness.

When the believer imagines entering Hellfire and the punishments therein, his life shows discomfort and his anxiety increases. In both cases, whether he imagines the pleasures of Paradise or the disturbances of Fire, he becomes preoccupied with his Hereafter and so ignores the worldly life and all that it has therein; for either his heart wanders in the wilderness of longing [for Paradise] or is perplexed in the desert of fear [from the Fire], hence he cannot notice the pleasures of this worldly life.

When death is about to befall him, he strongly believes he will be saved. All the while continuing to hope for salvation for himself, therefore the agony of death eases upon him, when he is placed into his grave and the Angels come to ask him, the Angels would say to each other: 'leave him, for he has never rested [in his life] except now.'

I ask Allāh, Exalted be He, to endow us with complete heedfulness that encourages us to seek virtues and good deeds, and prevents us from choosing the lowly deeds and profanities; for only Allāh guides and facilitates while the rest are of no benefit.

CHAPTER TWO-HUNDRED-NINETY-NINE

The Perfection of Image Lies in its Structure

I contemplated the work of my Lord, Exalted be He, and came to realise an astonishing gem; Allāh, Most High, does not choose for His love and His closeness except those whose outer image and inner image are perfect.

However, I do not mean by that the good features; for the perfection of an image lies in its structure. A structured image cannot but enjoy some of the beauty that reflects the inner image manifesting in the perfection of mannerism, character and the disappearance of bad manners. Such a person does not happen to have in his character what can be deemed malicious or vile. Rather, his inner image is as good as his outer appearance.

Everyone saw [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) loved him, and our Prophet (ﷺ) was as beautiful as the moon when in full illumination. The righteous and pious men can be dark-coloured; but are beautiful in appearance and with a pleasant character.

The level of perfection in image (*khalq*) and character (*khuluq*) determines the excellence of deeds of a person and his closeness to his Lord. You will find people who are in a rank similar to the rank of the servant at the door, or the rank of the door keeper, are drawn close to Allāh, and it is very rare to find a person whose appearance and character are both completely perfect. In fact, there might be just one person whose both, appearance and character are completely perfect in every hundred years.

This rank does not result because of the endeavours of a person, but rather it is the rank that leads to such endeavours, because when such perfection develops, it encourages and motivates the person to act according to the level of perfection.

This is a matter that is beyond the power of mankind since it's intrinsic, and if Allāh assigns you to serve a purpose, He will prepare you for it.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED

Allāh Transcends Purpose and Wisdom

I contemplated upon some people who claim to be intellectual and object to the wisdom of the Creator!

To this effect, it should be said to them, 'Is not Allāh the One who endowed you with the intelligence that you have used to object to His wisdom? Is it even coherent to think that He granted you perfection and accepted upon Himself shortcomings? Indeed, this is gross disbelief that is even beyond the vilest of disbelief!'

The leader of this group and the first one who submitted to his own intelligence and disbelieved in Allāh's wisdom was *Iblīs* (*Shayṭān*). He relied on his own reasoning and looked through the lenses of his intelligence upon which he thought that the essence of fire is worthier and higher in rank than the essence of clay, and hence he rejected the wisdom of the Creator.

This approach was adopted by many of those who rejected the wisdom of the Creator such as Ibn Al-Rawandī, and Al-Baqrī, not to mention the vile Ma'arrī who said, 'How could Ibn al-Ḥajjaj be accused of absurdity and heresy, while time is indeed worse than him?'

Do you think he meant the actual time? No because the passing of time does not do anything; rather it was his corrupted and false belief [i.e. he was referring to Allāh who created time]! In fact, he eagerly waited for death thinking that after death he will rest and be eased. And he used to advise against marriage and worship as he did not believe there was any wisdom behind creating mankind except to let them endure hardship and weariness. And hence bodies are destined to perish!

If it was as he assumed, it means that the creation was with no purpose and lacked wisdom, and Allāh transcends over such defects and shortcomings. Allāh said,

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَٰطِلًا

> "And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly."
>
> [*Sad* (38): 27]

If Allāh Mentioned that all what He has created for us was not without a purpose, does it make sense to claim that we, whom He has created to worship Him and whom has obligated us to adhere to His law, were created for no purpose?

The likes of this ignorance comes only from those who adopt mental rationality approach to judging matters based on their apparent aspects just like how a person finds a building being demolished and yet cannot identify the wisdom behind this action.

This is because the intellect on its own cannot notice the wisdom behind it, but if the wisdom of actions was disclosed to him, he will then realise that these actions are purposeful and correct. This is similar to the case of [Prophet] Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) and Al-Khidr when the latter disclosed to Mūsā the reasons for making a hole in the boat and killing the young boy.

It is common knowledge that slaughtering animals, the cutting of a loaf of bread and the chewing of food, appears to be of no benefit at all. However, after knowing that they serve as nutrition for the body, which is worthier than the slaughtered animal, such actions manifests their goodness.

I wonder at minds that cannot comprehend the wisdom behind the creation while ruling that it is obligatory to obey the Most Wise, how could they stand in objection against His Actions?

I seek refuge with Allāh from failure.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-ONE

Being Gentle when Preaching to People of Authority

The one who advises or preaches to a person in authority ought to observe extra kindness (*talatuf*), gentleness (*rifq*) in words and approach, and to avoid mentioning before him what may infer that he is an oppressor (*ẓālim*).

This is because people of authority enjoy sole and absolute power. Hence if they were admonished, that will put them in humiliation which they cannot handle or afford.

The preacher should mention and remind them of the honour of being in charge of the affairs of Muslims. The reward resulting from looking after the affairs of Muslims, and narrate to them the stories of the preceding righteous and just rulers.

The preacher needs to understand and look into the condition and state of the leader before preaching to him.

If he finds his demeanour to be pleasant—as was the case of Ḥarūn Al-Rasheed who used to cry when Mansūr ibn Ammar and others used to preach to him—and his intent is good, he should increase his preaching and advice.

However, if he finds him to be oppressive, does not concern himself with good deeds, and ignorance has over-powered him. He ought to spare no effort to avoid meeting him and to avoid preaching to him because he could put his life at risk; if he praises him he will be a liar and a condoner. Thus if he finds himself in a position that forces him to advise him, he should make his advice implicit and in the form of hints.

Previously, some among the leaders used to be touched and moved by advices and reminders they heard, showing patience to any harsh words directed at them.

A person said to Al-Manṣūr in his face that he was an oppressor but still he was patient and did not admonish the advisor. How times have changed where most of the rulers have become corrupted and yet condoned by the scholars. Whoever does not condone them does not find anyone to accept the truth he advocates, thus he remains silent.

The positions of authority were not taken up except by those who were well versed in religion and educated with vast experience. Today you find them only to be equal in ignorance, making these positions assumed by incompetent and unqualified people.

These are the kind of rulers you must be cautious of and stay away from, but whoever is trialled with preaching to them should have upmost awareness of the words he utters and should not be deceived with their request to preach to them because as soon as you utter one word that contravenes their interest, their anger will be provoked.

The one who intends to advise and remind the ruler must beware of mentioning the names of other people of authority as examples in his reminders because they will target the preacher to harm him as they fear that the ruler will become aware of their state and so be the reason of their end.

Thus, staying away from them in these times is better and avoiding preaching to them is safer. If one had to, he should ensure his advice to be delivered gently with focus on preaching to the laypeople who will listen to him, without mentioning them in any of his words.

And success is from Allāh.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWO

The Truth Cannot be Confused with Falsehood

Truth has no similarities with falsehood and cannot be confused with it. But falsehood is disguised to those who have no sense of understanding, namely those who claim to have supernatural powers and miracles.

The number of people claiming to be Prophets even has been many but their wickedness and disgrace manifested to the public due to their reprehensible ideas, their indulgence in lustful desires and the nonsense in both the words they uttered and the actions they performed, all of which were exposed.

Aḥmad Al-‘Ansī is one of the people who claimed to be a Prophet and gave himself the nickname *"Dhūl Khimār"* (i.e. the person of the veil) because he used to say: ‘I receive revelation through *Dhūl Khimār*.’

At the beginning, he was a fortune-teller who practiced black magic that made him conjure up wonders. His appearance was towards the end of the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the tribes of Madhhaj, Wā’id and Najrān sided with him and then expelled both ‘Amr Ibn

Hazm and Khālid Ibn Saʿīd, who were two of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) to then be alone in power to govern Yemen. He then killed Shahar Ibn badhām and married his daughter who helped in killing him. His end was during the life of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and it was apparent to those with intelligent minds that he used sorcery.

Musaylamah was also one of the ones who claimed to be a Prophet and gave himself the nickname *"Raḥmān Al-Yamamah"* because he used to say: 'I receive revelation via Raḥmān!'

He believed in the Prophet (ﷺ) but claimed that Allāh assigned him to be the partner of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in the Message of Islām that he advocates! Surprisingly, he then accused the Prophet (ﷺ) of being a liar though he believed in him! He then introduced a new book that made people laugh as its passages were ridiculous such as the passage that stated, 'Oh frog! The daughter of two frogs! Pure is what you choose, your upper part is in the water, and your bottom part is in the mud. From the wonders is the black sheep that gives us white milk!' This poor language exposed his fabrication, not to mention the incidents when he passed his hand over the head of a boy causing him to lose his hair! And when he spat in a well, the water therein dried up!

He married Sujāh who also claimed to be a Prophetess, and made her dowry to cancel the Prayer of *Fajr* and *Isha'*! Sujāh claimed to be a Prophetess after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) and some people believed and followed her. Then she said to her followers, 'Prepare the horses, be ready to loot, and then pass over the white clouds, for there is no screen to prevent them, and fight them!' Then she headed with her followers to Yamamah, the town of Musaylamah who feared her and decided to send her a letter with a gift so when she met him, she said, 'Read to me what Jibrīl reveals to you.' He said: 'You women were created in crowds, and were made wives for us; we penetrate you until it is penetrated.' She then said, 'You spoke the truth, you are a Prophet. He then said to her the following lines of poetry:

Come to the bedchamber....for the bed has been prepared for you
If you wish we coddle you....and if you wish you can be on four
If you like, You can have two thirds of it ....or if you like, you can have it all

So she said, 'I would rather all of it for it is more uniting!'

And this exposed her lies and false claim to the intelligent people among her followers, hence, 'Utārid Ibn Hājib, one of her followers, recited the following lines of poetry:

Our Prophet has become a female that a man sleeps with,
while the Prophets of people are males.
May the curse of Allāh, the Lord of all people, be upon Sujāh and everyone who deceived us to follow her.
I mean with that Musaylamah, the Liar, may he not be watered fro,
any source where ever he is.

Then, after some time, she repented and embraced Islām and continued to expose the lies of Musaylamah until he was killed.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THREE

The Happy One is he who Scrutinises Himself

I wonder at the one who exists and yet cannot understand the meaning of existence! If he does, his actions contravene his understanding for he knows for a fact that his life span is short, yet wastes his life sleeping, seeking worldly pleasures and indulging in idle talk all the while his days should be spent in worship not in idleness.

Though religion ordains that he is to spend [part of] his wealth going against his innate nature, he decides to be a miser. As soon as he is on his deathbed however, he bequeaths that after he dies, to give away his wealth in charity and do with it such and such! What does he expect this to be although it is unlikely he will enact this?

The reason for the order to spend his wealth [for the sake of Allāh] during his lifetime and while being in a good state of health is to oppose his difficult innate nature that is disposed to collecting wealth and not giving it away!

If you are a person with intellect, you will notice the big difference between the two cases because the one who is content will scrutinise himself and act upon that. He will conclude by his intellect and benefit from time that will come to an end; he will take advantage of his life because its end will be very soon.

Woe to you! What benefit do you find in saving wealth that adds no good deeds to your balance nor will it be a landmark in history.

Have you not heard of the amounts that Abū Bakr gave away in charity as opposed to the miserliness of Tha'labah?

Have you not noticed the effect of praising Ḥātim as opposed to the niggardliness of Al-Ḥabāhib?

Woe to you! If you were to be tested with your wealth, losing some of it; or if you were tested in your health and become sick for one night, you would have complained and yet you still receive what you ask Allāh for.

All the while you do not fulfil His right upon you. Indeed, your example is like those whom Allāh condemned in the verse,

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ ۝١

> "Woe to *Al-Mutaffifun* (those who give less in measure and weight)."
>
> [*Al Mutaffiffin* (83):1]

You need to know that the amount you have overlooked and neglected is the part that shall lavish you in the eternal reward if it was used in acts of worship.

Free of defects and imperfections is the One who bestowed His grace upon people to understand the purpose of their existence and accordingly exhausted their bodies in performing good deeds—He put a cover on the hearts of others so that their existence becomes as if they do not exist.

How could an intelligent person not exhaust his body in worship when the reward is Paradise? O servitude!

Do you see the power of Allāh manifested in your existence? By Allāh, your existence is evidence of His existence and His bounties upon you are evidence on His Generosity.

As He favoured you over the rest of creation, favour Him in your heart over all of your wants and needs.

Truly disgraced is he who does not know Him. Poor is he who shuns away from Him. Humiliated is he who seeks pride in other than Him, and woeful is he who occupies his time to serve other than Him.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FOUR

Diverting from Worldly Pleasures and Abandoning them

I wonder at an intelligent person who still finds comfort in life while he sees how death overpowers his peers and neighbours, particularly in old age! I wonder at a person who sees snakes advancing towards him and yet does not feel intimidated!

Does not the old man feel the crawling of death in his limbs, pulling out the knife of strength and taking down the brave and courageous, changing the black [hair] to white, and every day the shortness increases?

If the intelligent person observes the signs in himself, it will be enough to divert his attention from the ruins of this worldly life and the departure of friends, even if such calamities are disturbing.

But he one who finds his home on fire and becomes busy saving his furniture, will not pay attention to the homes of his neighbours.

What diverts one's attention away from this worldly life and eases departing from its pleasures is that it replaces what you know with what you do not recognise.

Truly, the departure is very easy! Perhaps the soul finds the ones it missed in this life and so meets the ones it loves in the other life.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIVE

Allāh Gifted Humans with Intellect to Establish Evidence Against them

I looked in the verse,

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ
يَسْجُدُ لَهُۥ مَن فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَن فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱلشَّمْسُ وَٱلْقَمَرُ
وَٱلنُّجُومُ وَٱلْجِبَالُ وَٱلشَّجَرُ وَٱلدَّوَآبُّ

> "Do you not see that to Allāh prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people?"
>
> [*al-Hajj* (22):18]

Wherein Allāh, Most High, stated that all inanimate objects were depicted to be prostrating, whereas in the verse,

وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ ٱلنَّاسِ
وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ ٱلْعَذَابُ ۗ وَمَن يُهِنِ ٱللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن مُّكْرِمٍ ۚ
إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۩ ﴿١٨﴾

> "But upon many the punishment has been justified. And he whom Allāh humiliates—for him there is no bestower of honour. Indeed, Allāh does what He wills."
>
> [*al-Hajj* (22):18]

He exempted a group from the intelligent. This dissimilarity between inanimate objects and mankind reminded me of the lines of poetry that say:

The silent did not disbelieve in the One who created it
Whereas some of the speaking creatures dared to disbelieve.

I said, "This is indeed a great power! He grants a man intellect then deprives him of its benefit! This is the strongest evidence of the existence the Almighty and the All-Powerful!

Otherwise, how could a person with sensibility and intellect not to know the existence of the One who brought him into existence?

And how could such a person sculpture an idol and then worship it?

This would have not been the case if not for Allāh granting some people the sense of intellect to establish evidence against them, yet then He blinded their hearts to deviate from the right path.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIX

Let the Slave Take Provisions as much as is Needed for the Journey

I could not find any deed as grievous for the believer as mixing with people of impious nature, for the characters of people susceptible to influencing, and if he does not intentionally simulate their manners—or his character was saved from their influence—he will become slack in his worship.

This is because seeking the pleasures of this worldly life by itself provokes one to chase after them. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saw a sheet placed on his door as a barrier so he tore it off and said, "What do I have anything to do with this world?"[227] and he wore a garment having marks so he threw it away and said, "Its markings have distracted me."[228], and he wore a ring then he threw it aside and said, "I look at it and I look at you"[229] (i.e. it may distract you from your purpose in life).

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[227] Reference already mentioned

[228] Reference already mentioned

[229] Reference already mentioned

The same effect also happens when watching people indulge in worldly pleasures and in observing their abodes and life conditions, especially if a person aspires to achieve a higher status in life.

The same is the case with listening to songs and mixing with ascetics whose main concern revolves around securing their provision for the day, and so they would accept it from anyone even if he is an oppressor.

These types of people lack the piety and fear of Allāh as the earlier pious ascetics such as Sarī Al-Saqtī, who used to cry all night long and practice the highest level of piety.

They are a people who neither have the piety of Sarī nor the worship of Al-Junayd; all what they know is eating, dancing, being lazy and listening to the singing of beardless boys. To the point that one whose word is taken with high respect said, 'I attended one of their gatherings with an old man who is looked up to as their sheikh. They had a beardless young boy as a singer and the shaikh threw on the cheek of this boy one *dinar*!'

As for their claim that listening to these songs reminds them of the Hereafter or encourages them to work for the Hereafter is beyond lies! I am not surprised to see them in such a condition, but I wonder at the ignorant people who sponsor them financially for such entertainment.

People used to see the worship and piety of ascetics and be impressed by their state and they are excused for feeling so, though some among those ascetics were deviated, which I have mentioned in my book *Talbis Iblīs*.[230]

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[230] Complete translation of the Classical Text available in English, '*The Devil's Deceptions*' published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers under the Ibn Jawzī series 2014

Today however, the hidden has been exposed and you find them visiting oppressors, accepting their grants, shaking their hands while wearing worn out clothes! This is what Ṣūfism is all about today. Do they not feel ashamed of showing asceticism in their clothes for the sake of people, not for the sake of Allāh?

And not care showing this asceticism with respect to food and doubtful matters? Indeed, staying away from these kinds of people is a must.

The one who devotes himself to the worship and obedience of Allāh should avoid stepping into the worldly life of people. When leaving solitude out of necessity, one must lower his gaze and not visit nor meet any person assuming a position, but if he finds himself compelled to do so, he should keep it to the minimum.

Do not mix with the common laypeople unless out of necessity and while being cautious; nor showing interest in having wives but rather be content with having a woman who is pious. As for the one whose sole interest is in seeking knowledge, he should seclude himself for his study and avoid learning from the learned followers (i.e. he should carve his own rank in knowledge), but if he is more into worship, he should be more cautious. He must let his solitude be his affable companion and reading the stories of the righteous predecessors be his partner.

He should also dedicate some of his time to visiting the graves of the righteous people and stay there alone for some time, and not to overlook praying night prayers (*tahajjud*) regularly.

It is better to be after the first half of the night, and let him prolong it as much as possible, and should he think that his death is approaching, to stop hoping for a long time in the future. He should take all supplies needed to make him reach his final destination.

I ask Allāh, Exalted be He, to endow us with awakening from His grace, inclination to His servitude and to save us from being diverted from Him.

Truly, He is near and answers.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SEVEN

If you Count the Bounties of Allāh you will Never be able to

The more I observe the bounties that Allāh keeps bestowing upon me, the more I find myself struggle to find the appropriate way to express my gratitude and thankfulness (*shukr*).

I know that thanking Allāh per se, is one of the bounties of Allāh upon His slaves but still I do not know how to thank Him for all that He bestowed upon me!

I admit my shortcomings and acknowledge that I have not fulfilled His rights upon me, so I hope my acknowledgment will be a means whereby I could fulfil some of His rights upon me.

I have a characteristic that I hope because of which, I receive all goodness, that is: while the one who prays or fasts thinks he accomplished his worship or fulfilled all the rights to One whom he is serving—I see that when I pray two *rak'ah*, I have actually prayed to save myself because the One whom we all serve does not need my service.

Some of the scholars used to remind people that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Supplication is worship”[231] and I say worship is supplication.

I thus wonder at those who stand to pray at night asking Him for their needs and yet believe they are worshipping their Lord while, in fact, they take the means whereby their needs be granted to them because of His grace to wake them up at night by itself is a grace their worship cannot match.

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[231] Abū Dāwūd, #1479, Tirmidhī, #3372 and Ibn Mājah, #3828 on the authority of al-Num‘ān Ibn Bashīr (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu*). It is ṣaḥīḥ see *Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd.*

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-EIGHT

One Attains what it Occupies Himself With

I noticed that most of the scholars are busy with the outer image of knowledge; the concern of the jurist is to teach people and the concern of the exhorter is to preach to people.

The former dedicates all his efforts to conduct his classes and rejoices when seeing plenty of people attending his lectures; he trivialises the views of his opponents and spends all his time thinking of matters of dispute in order to defeat his opponents. He aspires to be looked up to, glorified among people and he even may endeavour to collect wealth and mingle with rulers.

The latter endeavours to ensure his words are articulated beautifully whereby he can attract more audience and provoke people to glorify him; hence he rebukes and defames his peers [as he wants all the attention for himself].

The hearts of these people are heedless (*ghafla*) of Allāh, Most High; otherwise, if they had the least knowledge about Allāh, they would have preoccupied themselves with His servitude and enjoyed invoking Him in privacy (*khalwa*).

However, when such hearts are empty of all that, only the affair of this low worldly life busies their minds, therefore they cannot seem to find the sweet taste of worship when they do it.

They prefer the gatherings of people and find intimacy when people visit them. Indeed, this is the sign of failure and disgrace.

Contrastingly, whenever the scholar endeavours to please Allāh, Most High, he is preoccupied with His obedience and worship. He will find meeting people and conversing with them the most unbearable thing for his heart, and that solitude with His Lord is the most beloved act to his heart. Hence he will be too busy to rebuke his peers or seek power because he devoted his endeavours for his Hereafter, which is above all other endeavours.

The self must have something to occupy itself with; for whosever endeavours to serve mankind and shuns themselves from Allāh, will be focusing on his position in this life, and this requires him to turn away from Allāh. Allāh said,

مَّا جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لِرَجُلٖ مِّن قَلۡبَيۡنِ فِي جَوۡفِهِۦۚ

"Allāh has not put for any man two hearts within him."
[*al-Aḥzāb* (33):4]

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-NINE

O Allāh, Allow Us to Recognise the Reality of Everything We See

The following supplication was transmitted in one report, "O Allāh, allow us to recognise the reality of everything we see."

These are very eloquent and nice words because most people do not recognise the reality of what they see.

They think of the mortal [i.e. human being] as if he is an immortal being and cannot imagine that there will be an end to their current condition, although they are fully aware of such facts.

The reason for that is because their perceptual eyes only look at the present time and are unable to foresee the end of pleasures and the lasting of its sins. If the thief foresaw the cutting of his hand before stealing, he would have undermined the value of the stolen item.

He who collects wealth and does not spend his wealth is a person who could not see the reality of wealth as being a mere means whereby one can achieve his purposes. It is not something sought for in and of itself.

He who sees the sin with the eyes of lust (*shahwa*), will not see its reality because sins have all the vices you can name, not to mention its punishment being delayed to the Hereafter and its consequent shame being immediate.

Try to contemplate copulation as the greatest tangible lust of mankind. If you wish to see its reality think of this: the semen is produced only after consuming food and drinking liquids. When you contemplate the food, you will think of the land that needs to be cultivated for a cow and a plough that is made of iron and wood with ropes attached to it.

The plough will make you think of the ropes that will make you come to think of the plant of hemp and how it's fanned and peeled. And the iron that was used to cut it and flatten it. The wood will make you think of trees and resultant dust, as well as the movement of the wheels and its work, the process of harvesting, fanning and grinding the plants to become wheat then turned to dough that is baked.

The work of the oven and collecting of sticks to heat the oven and many other things if one wants to think of them. This is why people say, 'for each bite you eat, there are three hundred people who worked until it became a bite in your mouth'.

If one eats this bite of food, one should think of the creation of teeth to cut it and the molar teeth to grind it and the saliva of the mouth that softens it and the tongue that shuffles it around inside the mouth while the muscles of the mouth let part of it pass and some other parts stick in order to facilitate its swallowing.

Then the intestines take it in to deliver it afterwards to the liver that cooks it until it becomes a blood whose deposits are ejected to the spleen and water into the bladder, which takes the best of what the blood and liver purified to the liver, brain and heart.

It marches to the two testicles to prepare the material needed for the creation of a human being.

When the fires of lust move, the drop of semen is gushed forth. The religion declared semen to be pure and so is the womb, and the place where the member of a man penetrates and as a result a human being who testifies that Allāh is One is created.

In light of all the above, it is evident that a human has not come into existence until the Most Precious has been implored and after wonders have taken place, and not as a result of things we have made!

Do you think a person who understands the above would waste this semen in unlawful places? Or even penetrate his organ in a filthy place causing this pure semen to be wasted? There are plenty of disasters that result because of adultery and fornication, making the pleasure of one moment nothing compared to one tenth of its harm such as: violating the honour of people, exposing what are unlawful to be sighted, betraying his Muslim brother when cheating with his wife, if she was married.

And the scandal resulting for the female he committed fornication with as she is has a status of his sister and daughter. If she got pregnant while she is married, the child be deemed the child of her husband and so this fornicator will cause that child to receive inheritance from his father though he is not entitled to it and prevents someone from receiving inheritance [as in some cases in inheritance when a child is born].

This will continue from one generation to another. As for the wrath of Allāh upon the fornicator, it is known. Allāh said,

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلزِّنَىٰٓ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَٰحِشَةً وَسَآءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

> "And come not near to the unlawful sexual intercourse. Verily, it is a *fāḥishah* [i.e. anything that transgresses its limits (a great sin)], and an evil way."
>
> [*al-Isrā'* (17): 32],

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "There is no sin greater after associating partners with Allāh, in the sight of Allāh, than a drop of semen which a man puts in a womb of a woman who is not allowed for him."[232]

And whoever understands the reality of things will know that the purpose of this drop of semen is to bring into existence people who worship one Lord.

Was it not for the desire to have sex, copulation would never happen because copulation requires the use of the private organs, which are not deemed pretty in appearance or smell; yet the lust is what makes one overlook all these ugly attributes in order to produce a child since this lust is temporary and so whoever sought fulfilling his lust and overlooked the crime of adultery and fornication, is indeed a person who does not see the reality of things.

This example you can apply to other issues such as food, drink, money etc.

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[232] It is mentioned in Ibn Kathīr, 3/327, and he said, 'It was reported by Ibn Abī al-Dunya.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TEN

There is a Benefit in the Creation of what Harms

If someone asks, 'What's the benefit in creating something that is harmful?' The answer to that question is that, 'It is established that the wisdom of the Creator is evident, and if such wisdom is unknown to us in some matters, we must submit. All the good things He created are just a model of the reward He prepared in the Hereafter, and all the harmful things He created are just a model of the Punishment He prepared in the Hereafter; hence He created nothing that is harmful except that it has some benefit in it.'

Some people consulted a doctor about the opinion of a person who says, 'I am like the scorpion; I neither harm nor benefit.'

The doctor said, 'This is a man with little knowledge! Because scorpions are beneficial and can be used as medicine.'

It can be used to cure its sting if its belly is split and then pressed on the place of the sting, and it can remove the stones in the kidney if it is placed inside a closed clay pot with covered sides then this pot be placed in an oven until the scorpion turns into ashes.

The sick can then drink the size of half a *daniq* (square measure of that ashes or more and it will crumble it without harming any other parts of his body. The stings of scorpions can also cure severe fever and semi-paralysis, and can also be dipped in fat until the fat takes all its nutrients then used as a cream to cure tumors and the examples of this are too many to count.

The ignorant is the enemy of what he is ignorant of, and the greatest foolishness is when the ignorant attempts to refute the learned.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-ELEVEN

Indulging the Intellect in Knowing the Creator Will Make One Bask in Loving Him

The more people indulge their intellect in knowing the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and witnessing His Greatness (*ʿaẓma*), Kindness (*lutf*) and Superiority (*rifʿa*); the more they will overwhelmingly bask in their love (*maḥabba*) for Him—leading them outside the boundaries of people's norms.

There were people whose love for Allāh overwhelmed and overpowered them; some of them could no longer stand being in the company of people, and some of them did not stop uttering His remembrance (*dhikr*).

Some of them did not sleep except in the case when sleepiness overcame them, and some wandered in the deserts; and yet there were some whose bodies become too weak and fragile.

Indeed, the love they bask in is intoxicating and it is a uniquely tasteful drink! The ecstasy (*wajd*) they experience through the state of longing for their Lord is indescribable.

Abū 'Ubaydah Al-Khawās used to be overwhelmed by his love for Allāh and so he used to walk in the markets saying, 'I do long for Whom I cannot see but He can see me.'

Fatḥ Ibn Shukruf used to say, 'My longing (*shawq*) to meet You has become too long so hasten my death to meet You.'

Qays Ibn Rab'ī used to look as if he was drunk [due to his overwhelming love for Allāh] without drinking any intoxicated drink.

Ibn 'Aqīl used to say, 'Wearing the humble clothes of servitude to serve Allāh is better than embellishing oneself for any other occasion.'

Have you ever seen better half-naked people than the people who are in the state of *Iḥrām*?

Have you ever seen those adorning themselves with feathery soft clothes as lofty and embellished clothes as the pious people?

Have you even seen more intoxicating than the yawning of those who pray at late nights?

Have you ever seen better intoxication than the state of those who are overwhelmed by their love for Allāh?

Have you ever seen as pure water as the drops of tears falling from the eyes of the remorseful ones?

Have you ever seen humbled heads similar to the heads of those who stand in humility before their Lord?

Is there anything that touches the earth better than the foreheads of those who pray?

Has the breeze of night moved the leaves of the trees and was enough to move the garments of the people who pray at night?

Were the raised and stretched hands outnumbered by the hands of those who shun themselves away from their lord?

Have the hearts been moved by the melodious sounds or tones of strings as it provoked the longing of those who yearn for their Lord?

Showing humility and humbleness to attain the loftiest of all goals is praised; therefore it is commendable to serve the bountiful Conferrer while wearing the clothes of servitude.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWELVE

Manage the Intellect

Many of those in position of authority and those who rule are not acquainted with religion or endeared to follow its moral codes. If a ruler was originally of poor intellect (*qila al-ʿaql*) and not given to disciplining his nature and maturing his thoughts, how can goodness be expected? The mind grows with education, acquiring skills, experience and training and continuous application of them.

Indeed most of them are not acquainted with religion (*dīn*), nor follow its etiquette (*adab*) at all. Their intellect remains scarce and the little they have is not helping but rather hindering. If a bodily organ is not regularly performing its function, it breaks down[1] and declines. That is why writers grow weak in their eyesight (*abṣār*), while the eyesight (*abṣār*) of Bedouins grows sharper as nothing obstructs their line of sight. The function of the intellect (*ʿaql*) is to think (*tafakkur*) and consider the consequences of actions (*ʿawāqib al-aḥwāl*) and deduce results. Yet the former group fill themselves with all types of food that harms the intellect. They go to sleep and upon awaking, consume intoxicants. Their intellect is therefore, simultaneously hindered and covered; what poor level of management!

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[1] Many of them risk myopia and need the aid of spectacles.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTEEN

Conversing with the Laypeople

Speaking to lay people about matters too heavy for them to comprehend poses risks; this also includes opposing what is firmly established in their hearts (*qulūb*).

Imagine someone who firmly believes in *tashbīh*[2], or that the physical essence (*dhāt*) of Allāh is adjacent to the Throne (*'arsh*), is the same size as the Throne, or is four fingers away from the Throne—suppose he similarly heard from his teachers and believed that when He descends to the Lower Heaven, the upper six Heavens are absent of Him. If such a person is invited to deny such beliefs[3] and is told, 'Allāh is not like anything that can come to your mind. You should pass the ḥadīths along as they come to you, without dwelling on your mental image of them' this would become difficult for him for a couple of reasons:

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[2] The belief Allāh Almighty resembles His creation, which is a rejected Muslim belief.

[3] *Tanzīh*: to deny all false beliefs such as *tashbīh*, *tajsīm* etc. and sanctify Allāh from what they entail.

Firstly: He being dominated by emotion, which is stronger among the laypeople.

Secondly: His trust in the teachers who are (likely) more ignorant than he is.

Therefore, whoever addresses such persons with these types of matters risks his life. It was conveyed to me that someone who strongly believed in *tashbih* heard a scholar speaking about *tanzih* and said, 'By Allāh, if I were given the opportunity, I would strike him dead.'

It is thus prudent to beware addressing a commoner about matters he cannot endure, except with subtlety and caution because you will be risking your life without having any impact on changing his belief.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FOURTEEN

A True Person Preserves the Limits (*ḥifẓ al-ḥudūd*) and Sincerity of Deed (*ikhlāṣ al-ʿamal*)

Do not be fooled by a man's humming (of supplications) and what you observe of him performing prayers, fasting, alms giving and self-isolation (*ʿuzla*). The true man is one who observes two things: Preserves the limits (*ḥifẓ al-ḥudūd*), and is sincere in his deed (*ikhlāṣ al-ʿamal*).

How often have we seen a worshipper (*mutaʿabbad*) who exceeds the limits through backbiting and commits forbidden deeds on a whim! How often have we found a religious person, the purpose of whose deeds was not for Allāh, the Almighty!

This illness fluctuates among people. A true person is one who observes the limits set by Allāh—which are His obligations—and one whose intentions (*qaṣd*) are proper so that his words and deeds are sincerely (*khāliṣ*) for Allāh, not aiming for people or their praise.

A man may be humble to be called *'ascetic'* (*zāhid*), he may be silent to be labeled *'God-fearing'* (*khā'if*), and he may be disinterested in the worldly pleasures to be known as a *'hermit'* (*nāsiq*).

The mark of a sincere person (*mukhlis*) is to be among people in public, as he is in solitude (*khalwa*) by himself. He may even feign smiling and happiness among people to avoid being called an ascetic (*zāhid*).

Ibn Sirīn used to laugh in the day, but when the night came, it was as if he killed the townsfolk.

Know that the Worshipped (Allāh) does not want associates (*shirkā'*). The sincere one dedicates the deeds to Him alone, and the insincere one associates with Him to gain people's praise.

This will turn against him, because the hearts of people are in Hand of Allāh, and He will turn them against him and not the other way round.

Therefore, a successful person is one whose deeds are mostly hidden (from people) and sincerely (*khālis*) for Allāh. This is the one loved by people, even if he did not care for them, for they hate the insincere, even if his worship was evident.

A person who has these attributes does not make short on pursuing knowledge (*talab al-'ilm*) or virtues (*fadā'il*). He fills his time with as much good as he can and his heart does not grow weary of its work, until it is fully occupied with the Truth (that is Allāh).

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTEEN

The Tyrants' Assistant is a Tyrant as well

I saw people who are negligent in paying their debts, and who bequeath, "When I die, bury me in the tomb of Aḥmad[4] ." Did they not hear that the Messenger (ﷺ) refrained from praying (the funeral) upon those who died without settling their debts and those who unlawfully took from war booty, saying, "My prayer will not benefit them"[5]

I have seen scholars who were driven by the love of fame, requesting permission from the Ruler to be buried in the grave of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal; not knowing that numerous people are buried there.

None of them is unaware that he is not worthy of that, so where is the self-humility?

Did they not hear that 'Umar ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz was asked, 'Would you like to be buried in the Room[6]?' He replied, 'For me to meet Allāh with every sin there is, apart from disbelief, is dearer to me than to believe myself worthy of that.'[7]

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[4] Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, one of the greatest Muslim jurists and ḥadith scholars.

[5] Abū Dāwūd, #2710, Nasa'ī, #1959 on the authority of Zayd Ibn Khalid al-Jahanī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*). It is weak see *Ḍa'īf Abū Dāwūd.*

However, the habits and the love of power dominated these people, such that knowledge was spoken in a manner of habit, and not for application.

We then found some scholars who became associated with Rulers and committed oppression, yet were fighting to be buried in Aḥmad's grave and wrote that in their wills.

If only they asked to be buried in an empty grave, instead they asked to be buried upon the dead bodies of others. When they are resurrected, they will be gathered in the state of oppression in which they were used—even in their death—and they will forget they used to be assistants to tyrants.

Did they not know that the tyrant's assistant is also a tyrant? It is said, 'It suffices for treason to be a traitor's trustee.'

The jailor said to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, 'Am I one of the tyrant's assistants?' He said, 'No. Rather you are one of the tyrants. The tyrant's assistant is the one who assists you.'

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[6] Referring to the room where the Messenger (ﷺ) is buried.

[7] Bayhaqī in *al-Shu'ab*, 3/53 is a statement of Mālik Ibn Dinār.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTEEN

Envy is Human Nature, Rectify it

I found people exaggerate in dispraising the envier (*ḥāsid*), saying, 'Envy (*ḥasd*) only comes from an evil person who objects to the grace (*ni'ma*) of Allāh and is unsatisfied with His decree (*qaḍā'*), and is stingy with his Muslim brother."

I examined this and did not find it to be true. Man does not generally like others to be better than him. If a man saw his friend exceeding him, he is affected by this and is not genuinely pleased, wishing that his friend did not attain what he did—or that he himself attained what his friend did so as not to be excelled. This is rooted in his nature, and is not of real cause for blame.

Blame the consequences from acting on it, with words or deeds. I thought I had reached this conclusion with my own study and research, but I found that Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī had reached it before me.'Abdu'l-Khaliq Ibn 'Abdu'l-Ṣamad narrated from Ibn Al-Nuqud, from Al-Mukhliṣ, from Al-Baghawi, from Abū Rūḥ, from Mukhlid ibn Al-Ḥusayn, from Hisham, that Al-Ḥasan said, 'Every child of Adam is instilled with envy upon his creation, but whoever does not follow that with words or deeds, is not held accountable.'

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SEVENTEEN

Choose the Religious Woman or Suffer

A major source of harm for a man is the multitude of women (*nisā'*).

His attention will primarily be divided in their love, trickery, jealousy and expenses, and he cannot assure that one of them will not dislike him, desire another or have no way out other than to get rid of him.

If he was able to avoid all that, he cannot guarantee earning for them, and if he did, he cannot help that some or all of them will get bored of him. He will then desire from other women that which cannot be attained; even if he had all the women of Baghdād and a strange woman came along, he will think she has what others did not.

There is no doubt that the *'new'* brings pleasure (*ladha*), but perhaps what is hidden is then exposed. So if he were to avoid every related harm, he exhausts his body in intercourse—his desire for pleasure blocking the continuation of pleasure. For it may be that one morsel prevents other morsels, and one pleasure causes the cessation of other pleasures.

The wise person is he who confines himself to one if she conforms to his desire, and she must have things others do not, but predominance is what matters. Good traits compensate for the poor ones.

Religiosity must be considered before beauty, because if religion is lacking, she is of no use to an honourable man.

Intercourse is among those things that ruin the man, he should not be deluded by his prowess and the pleasure he feels, because it takes from his strength what does not return. He should not be allured by a meeting, and should avoid women if he had a desire for survival.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-EIGHTEEN

Those Driven by Desire Are Not Hopeless

If you see one who is inherently foolish, then do not have hope for him. If one is wise however, yet whim-driven, have hope for him.

The evidence for this is reflected in how he manages his own affairs, even while being ignorant and hiding his sins from people. You find him paying attention in some situations, crying upon being admonished and having respect for people of religion. This is a whim-driven person (*maghlūb bi'l-hawā*) who is sane.

In addition to that, whenever he is awakened with regret (*nadm*) his lustful devil (*shayṭān al-hawā*) disappears and the angel of sanity (*mālik al-ʿaql*) appears.

As for the fool, his sign is his inconsideration for any short-term or long-term consequence of sin. He has no modesty whether people see him sinning, nor is he able to manage his own affairs. Such a person is far from hope (*rajāʾ*). In rare cases, he may come to his senses since he has a basis for sanity that remains covered by whims. If it is slightly uncovered, this can cause his return similar to an epileptic who comes out of it.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-NINETEEN

The Wise Considers Consequences

Caution (*ihtirāz*) is necessary and should be assumed with every eventuality; one should not say, "Things mostly turn out alright."

We have seen ships that became unbalanced on choppy water and sank along with those onboard, even though most of them turned out alright.

This is also how one should prudently manage his spending, even if he is in a good financial position, because it may not last. Needs need to be fulfilled and if wealth depleted and was replaced by poverty one cannot guarantee not to be in trouble and to be forced to seek help from people.

Similarly, the healthy should prepare for sickness (*marad*), and the young and strong should prepare for old age. Thus, in general, considering and weighing consequences and possibilities is a habit of a wise person.

Focusing on the here and now is a habit of the ignorant fools—exemplified by their consideration of seeing themselves to be healthy and forgetting sickness, or seeing themselves with wealth and forgetting poverty (*faqr*); they see a short-term pleasure and ignoring its consequences.

The purpose of the intellect is to consider consequences, and to guide a person towards the right direction.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY

Despair Not of Relief from Allāh

One's true faith (*imān*) is shown in adversity (*ibtilā'*) for he supplicates aplenty without finding an answer to his prayer. Yet his hope and faith do not change even with strong causes of despair, because he knows that Allāh is the Truth and He knows what is better for a person than anyone.

Patience (*sabr*) and faith (*imān*) are required of him, for Allāh only subjected him to that for his heart to accept, to test his patience and entice him to prayer (*du'ā'*) and seek refuge in Him.

He who wants his prayer be heard quickly and complains if it's not, is of weak faith (*ḍa'īf al-imān*) and considers himself entitled for a response as one who is receiving pay for his work.

Have you not heard the story of [Prophet] Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*)? He remained in adversity (*balā'*) for eighty years without losing hope. Even when Benyāmīn was also taken away, he did not lose hope (*aml*) and he said,

عَسَى ٱللَّهُ أَن يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا

> "Perhaps Allāh will bring them to me altogether."
> [*Yūsuf* (12):83]

Allāh relayed this meaning when He said,

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا
يَأْتِكُم مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُم مَّسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ
وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ
أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٢١٤﴾

> "Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed away before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] Messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When is the help of Allāh?' Unquestionably, the help of Allāh is near."
> [*al-Baqarah* (2): 214]

It is obvious that such words do not come out of Messengers and believers except after long adversity (*tul al-balā'*) and near loss (*qurb al-yā's*) of hope for a breakthrough (*farj*).

To this effect, the Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The servant does not commit wrongdoing until he becomes impatient." He was asked, "And how can he be impatient?" He replied, "He says: I supplicated to Allāh but Allāh did not answer me."[8]

Therefore, beware of complaining (*tastatīl*) about the long adversity (*zamān al-balā'*), or growing sick of continuous prayer (*kathra al-du'ā'*), because you are tried with adversity and you worship Allāh through patience (*sabr*) and prayer (*du'ā'*) [overcome that through]. Do not despair of Allāh's relief even if the adversity extends.

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[8] Reference mentioned already

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-ONE

Sins Result from Pursing Pleasures

I thought about why people enter the Hellfire (*sabab dukhūl jahannam*) and the answer was simply due to sins (*ma'āṣī*).

I thus pondered upon sins (*ma'āṣī*), and found them to result from pursuing (blameworthy) pleasures (*talab al-ladhāt*).

I then examined pleasures (*ladhāt*) and found them to be mere illusions (*khidā'*), containing enough distress to turn them into irritants (*akdār*) and stop them from being pleasures.

How then can the wise (*'aql*) follow his whims and be satisfied with Hellfire for the sake of these irritant (*akdār*) troubles?

An example of pleasure is fornication (*zinā*). If the motive was the process itself, it can be done in a lawful (*ḥalāl*) manner [by marriage].

If the motive was passion for a loved one (*ma'shūq*), the soul craves permanent stay (*dawām al-baqā'*) with the loved one, yet when it attains it, it grows tired of it. And if he stays with the loved one for a while and then leaves them, the pain of separation exceeds the pleasure of closeness.

In addition to that, if he had a child from fornication, then it is a permanent slander, further punishment and dishonour before the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and the creation (*makhlūq*).

The ignorant (*jāhil*) nevertheless, finds pleasure in fulfilling that desire and forgets what he brings upon himself of grievance in this life and the Hereafter.

Similarly, drinking intoxicants befouls the mouth and clothing and hinders the state of mind (*'aql*); its effects are known to the Creator and the creation.

One marvels at him who prefers a short-lived pleasure that brings penalty and strips away honour, and may even cause one to commit other major sins like murder.

All pleasures should be considered similarly. If you measure them with the scale of the intellect, they do not amount to a fraction of their ugly consequences in this life or the Hereafter.

These pleasures themselves are not much, so how can the Hereafter be forfeited at such price?

Glory is due to Him who blessed some people so that whenever they see a pleasure, they weigh it in the mind, look to its rewards and consequences, and then choose what is better. And Allāh obliterated some hearts, so that they only see the (alluring) images of things while ignoring their consequences.

We marvel at someone who distances himself from his wife when he is still young, in order to travel the path and be called a *'striver'*. He overcomes his whims to attain something higher—praise, how then will he not leave a forbidden pleasure to be praised in this life and the Hereafter?

Assuming you attained the pleasures you desired and assuming they were easy and you got rid of their troubles; where are you compared to others? Where is the hard work of a scholar who studied for fifty years? The hard work goes away and the knowledge remains.

Similarly, where is the idle man's pleasure?

The comfort goes away, and regret remains.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-TWO

Following the Sound Intellect Leads to Safety

Whoever follows mere senses (*ḥass*) is doomed and whoever follows the critical mind is safe. Because while the senses only perceive the present (worldly) life, the mind observes the creation and deduces the existence of a Creator who granted and permitted, released and forbade.

He informed us, "I am going to question and try you so that evidence of My existence is demonstrated in you when you leave what you desire to obey Me. I have built a residence for you in other than this life, to reward the obedient and punish the disobedient."

If people left their senses, their desires and their requests, they become close. However, if he commits adultery he is subject to flogging, if he consumes intoxicants he is subject to punishment, similarly if he steals or commits sins publicly among people—turning away from knowledge (*'ilm*) towards regret (*nadm*) upon ignorance (*jahl*).

We see many who follow their intellect who remain safe in this life and the Hereafter, distinguished with honour among people; and their lives with such pleasure are better than being driven by whim (*hawā*).

Therefore, let those who understand (*fahm*) take my warning, follow the evidence (*dalīl*) and they will be saved.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-THREE

Leaving the Unlawful Preserves your Religion and Dignity

One marvels at those who prefer the worldly desires, do they not measure them with the scales of the intellect even before the scales of divine revelation?

Take the greatest physical pleasure—copulation. The desired woman's aesthetics remain perfect from the onset of puberty until the age of thirty, after which they become affected. Her hair may begin to grey causing men to lose interest in her; yet boredom may set in earlier, for a long companionship uncovers one's flaws.

Nothing clarifies the flaws (*'ayb*) in the worldly women more eloquently than the saying of Allāh,

وَلَهُمْ فِيهَآ أَزْوَٰجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ

"And they will have therein [in Paradise] purified spouses."
[*al-Baqarah* (2):25]

If man pondered (*tafakkur*) upon a body that is filled with impurities (*najasha*), he would not like to be close to it, but the desire (*shahwa*) overcomes thoughts (*fikr*).

Wise is the one who preserves his religion (*dīn*) and dignity (*marū'a*) by leaving the unlawful (*ḥarām*), preserves his strength (*quwa*) for the lawful (*ḥalāl*) in order to spend it in pursuing virtues (*ṭalab al-faḍā'il*). Such as knowledge (*'ilm*), righteous deeds (*'aml*), and who does not exhaust his life and divide his heart (*qalb*) in matters of ill consequence:

Your *Hawdah*[9] holds no recompense for
my heart if I died of longing

We have seen many people overpowered by sexual desires, squandering their lives and departing quickly. Some wise people however, restrained themselves from this ordeal and only indulged in it whenever necessary. They kept most of their senses and strength, managing to enjoy them in this life along with attaining virtues—their own selves realised their strength and did not entice it to do what is harmful.

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[9] *Hawdah*: a seat with a canopy, for females riding on the back of a camel

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FOUR

Visions of the Prophet are of his Embodiment

People find difficulty in understanding the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) about seeing him in a vision, “Whoever saw me in a dream has seen me in reality.”[10] The ḥadīth apparently means that he sees him in reality. Some people see him in their dream as a youth, while others see him in old age; some see him healthy, while others see him ill.

Therefore, whoever believes that the Messenger’s (ﷺ) body that is buried in Madīnah exits the grave and arrives to where he is seen, possesses unparalleled ignorance. A thousand people could see him at the same time in a thousand places in different forms, so how can it be thought that they all see him in real person? They only see his embodiment.

Therefore, his saying (ﷺ), “Whoever saw me in a dream has seen me in reality.” means “has seen my image that he knows and that fulfills the intended purpose.”

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[10] Bukhārī, #6993 and Muslim, #2266 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiy-Allāhu ʿanhu*).

If someone asks, "What do you say about seeing Allāh [the Almighty] in visions?" We say: He only sees an example and not the reality. The example does not lack equality or resemblance, as Allāh [the Almighty] said,

أَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتۡ أَوۡدِيَةُۢ بِقَدَرِهَا

> "He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity."
>
> [*al-Ra'd* (13):17]

So he presented it as an example for the Qur'ān and how people benefit from it.

This clarifies that whoever sees Allāh Almighty [in a vision] only sees Him in a specific image [and not in reality], Exalted and Unified is He. Therefore, this clarifies what we have said.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-FIVE

The Ḥadīth Scholar Must be a Jurist

Know that if one's age was prolonged, I would not mind delving into each branch of knowledge to its end. Instead, life is short and knowledge is plentiful—man must therefore restrict himself; memorising the Noble Qur'ān to the ten *qira'āt* (modes of recitation). In ḥadīth, he should restrict himself to the *Ṣaḥīḥ*[11], the *Sunan*[12] and the classified *Musnad*[13]. The ḥadīth sciences have extended and methods have differed.

The ḥadīth science is self-related and is desirable. Jurists call it 'the science for the lazy', because they occupy themselves with hearing and writing it and find almost no difficulty memorising it, while missing out on the most important aspect, which is understanding it.

In the early days ḥadith scholars were the jurists, then jurists started to become ignorant of ḥadīth and ḥadīth scholars started to become ignorant of jurisprudence. Therefore, whoever had the resolve and wisdom occupied himself with the most important of each science, and made jurisprudence his top priority, for it is the greatest and most important science.

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[11] *Ṣaḥīḥ* Al-Bukhārī and *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim.

[12] *Sunan* Ibn Majah, *Sunan* Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* Al-Nasa'ī and *Sunan* Abū Dāwūd.

[13] *Musnad* Imām Aḥmad.

Abū Zurʿah said that Abū Thawr wrote to him, 'This ḥadīth was narrated through ninety-eight routes of narration from the Messenger (ﷺ), yet only a few routes are authentic thereof.' Thus, occupying oneself with what is not authentic prevents paying attention to what is more important.

If life was long enough for one to learn all the routes of all ḥadīth, then it would be excellent, but life is short.

When someone like Yaḥya ibn Maʿīn occupied himself with the chains of transmission of ḥadīth, he missed out on a lot of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), so much so that he was asked whether the menstruating woman could give burial baths to the dead and he did not know! Until Abū Thawr came and said, "She can, because 'Āʾishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*) said, "I combed the hair of the Messenger (ﷺ) while I was menstruating."[14] Yaḥya was more knowledgeable of ḥadīth than Abū Thawr, but he did not busy himself with understanding it.

I thus warn people of ḥadīth to become occupied with the many routes of transmission. It is very unbecoming for a scholar who has been recording ḥadīth for sixty years, to be asked about a matter without knowing Allāh's Judgment therein.

Additionally, I warn whoever is occupied with asceticism (*ẓuhd*) and solitude (*khalwa*) not to turn away from the pursuit of knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿilm*). He must have a sufficient portion to know, so that when he slips he knows how to release himself.

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[14] Bukhārī, #295 and Muslim, #316 on the authority of 'Āʾishah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhā*).

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SIX

The Sound Mind (*al-ʿaql al-salīm*) is in the Sound Body (*al-jism al-salīm*)

Knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of Allāh is only attained by people who are of perfect mind (*kāmil al-ʿaql*) and clear temperament (*ṣaḥīḥ al-mazāj*). Rising to the love of Allāh happens as such.

Some people have their minds weakened and their temperaments ruined, having poor nutrition that results in corrupted illusions (*khayālāt al-fāsidah*) coming to them—so they claim to love (*maḥabbah*) and know Allāh without having enough knowledge (*ʿilm*) to support their claims, and they were lost.

Know that some types of food (*ma'kulāt*) corrupt the mind (*ifsād al-ʿaql*) and other types increase the black bile component[15], leading to Melancholia; thus, so you find a person preferring solitude (*khalwa*) and fleeing from people. He may even consume less food that increases his illness causing him have illusions (*khayālāt*) that he regards as real.

Some of them say, "I have seen angels." Some claim love and fondness of Allāh without having any basis (*aṣl*) for that.

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[15] Referring to the four humors of the ancient Greek Humorism system.

The one with knowledge and wisdom walks the path between the two: knowledge (*ʿilm*) and intellect (*ʿaql*). If he reduces food intake, he does it wisely; the limit for such reduction is to forego excess food and its potent harms like bearing suspicion or a desire he fears getting used to.

Being extreme in reduction while being able to afford food has no basis in wisdom or in *Sharīʿah*, except if poverty (*faqr*) was prevalent forcing him to do so.

Whoever looked carefully at the lives of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) will find them being careful with what they consume, without ignoring the needs of their bodies.

How excellent is the statement of the Messenger (ﷺ), "A third [of one's stomach is] for food, a third for drink and a third for breathing."[16]

He (ﷺ) told ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) when he was sick, "Eat from this food, for it is more suitable for you than this."[17] He (ﷺ) consulted doctors, performed cupping and encouraged seeking of treatments. He (ﷺ) said, "Allāh did not send down any disease except also sending down its cure, so seek treatment."[18]

Thereafter came people who were ignorant of the knowledge (*ʿilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*) behind maintaining one's body.

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[16] Reference already mentioned

[17] Reference already mentioned.

[18] Bukhārī, #5678 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*).

Some of them stayed in the mountains eating nuts, and came down with colitis. Some reduced their intake of food until their strength weakened. Yet others only ate the food of the desert and some only ate beans and barley. This behavior caused illness to appear in bodies that contributed to ruining the mind.

All of them share lack of knowledge in general. Had they comprehended, they would have known that wisdom acts against this because the body is built on a set of substances, which lead to health when they are balanced and lead to illness when there is imbalance.

Many of such people fell ill and died at an early age, some of them got melancholia and others became delusional, claiming sightings of angels and other supernatural phenomenon.

As for people of knowledge and wisdom, they withdraw from people out of fear of sin (*kawf al-maʿāṣī*) and being witness to calamities. Some of them had their knowledge increase, so they remained occupied by the knowledge and love of Allāh from associating with people. They are the real solitary ones since their decisions stem from knowledge and wisdom, so they protect the body that acts as a vessel.

One should not be negligent with food, especially those who are not used to abstinence. And one should not wear wool on his body if he is not used to it. He should rather, look at the way of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*), because they have most excellent pattern of conduct. He should not pay attention to hearsay, for example when it is said, "Such-and-such was the ascetic who used to eat mud, and so-and-so used to walk barefoot, and such-and-such did not eat for a month."

Because those who are devoted (*mukhliṣ*) to Allāh Almighty are not on such paths, since the right path is to follow the Messenger (ﷺ), his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) and their pattern of conduct.

Some of them were satisfied with just milk, and they did not eat for days, but this was because of an emergent necessity, or because they were used to it just as the Bedouin is used to living primarily on milk and without being harmed by that.

The ḥadīth states, "Give each body what it is used to."[19] When an ascetic donated all of his fortune out of selflessness—and it is known that needs never end—so as his needs came, he had to seek (charity) and he was forced to take money from wrongdoers and give up his dignity.

The Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) used to trade and save money, while the ignorant ascetics (*juhhāl al-mutazahidīn*) believe that collecting money contradicts asceticism (*zuhd*).

To summarise this chapter, I say, 'The wise must strive to preserve his body and not expose it to any harm; he does not give it food that does not suit it, he does not disperse his fortune and strives to invest it in order to avoid being in need, because no ascetic ever dissembled except for a worldly purpose. He should follow the lives of the perfect ones among the righteous predecessors and occupy himself with knowledge, for it is the ultimate proof.'

Subsequently he is enticed to be secluded with his Lord and occupied with His love, so that such relationship with Allāh is a ripened fruit and not an abrupt one.

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[19] Al-ʿAjlūnī said in *Kashf al-Khufā'*, (2/66).

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SEVEN

Let Each of you Consider Whom you Befriend

I found myself affable in the companionship of friends. I observed and through experience found many of them envious of the blessings granted to others. (They are like) enemies who do not hide their slip-ups and are similar to people who know nothing about the rights of companionship, nor do they console their friend with their own wealth.

I pondered upon this and found that Allāh Almighty does not want the believer's heart to be attached to anyone but Him, so He turns the worldly life and its people against him so that he shows (more) affability (*uns*) with Him.

One must consider all people to be acquaintances; they contain no friends, but perhaps enemies. Do not reveal your secret to any of them, and do not consider anyone who is not able to assist in times of hardship to be a son, a brother or a friend.

Rather, treat them by the outward appearance and do not mingle with them except with care and when necessary. Otherwise keep away from them and focus on your own affairs, depending on Allāh, because no one brings good or removes harm except Him. Let Him be your Companion and close Friend, and the direction of your dependence and complaint. If your sight weakens, seek His help; and if your certainty falters, ask Him for strength. Beware of inclining towards others, for He is protectively jealous, and beware of complaining of His decree, for He may become angry without admonishing.

Allāh Almighty revealed to Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), 'Who got you out of the well? Who did? Who did?' He said, 'You.' He said, 'So why did you seek the help of another? I will extend (the period of) your imprisonment.'

Yūsuf was exposed to this trial because of a permissible deed,

> أَذۡكُرۡنِي عِندَ رَبِّكَ
>
> "Mention me before your master."
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12):42]

and

> وَيَوۡمَ حُنَيۡنٍ إِذۡ أَعۡجَبَتۡكُمۡ كَثۡرَتُكُمۡ فَلَمۡ تُغۡنِ
> عَنكُمۡ شَيۡـٔٗا
>
> "And [even] on the day of Hunayn when you were impressed with your great numbers."
>
> [*al-Tawbah* (9):25]

I know not a real life except for him who knows Him, lives with Him and shows etiquette before Him in his words and actions as if he sees Him. He stands guard over his eye against an unfitting look; stands guard over his tongue against an erroneous word, and stands guard over his heart against admitting others in. He feels alienated from people and occupied with Him. Such is the state of spiritual people.

As for the one who mixes (his relationship with Allāh with his relationship with people) will be overly troubled. The rightful only seeks what is higher and more proper. The poet said:

I do not like to walk, except to ascend
or lightening except if Yemeni[20]

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[20] The clouds coming north from Yemen contained rain, unlike the ones coming south from the Levant.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-EIGHT

The Purpose of Knowledge is not Mere Understanding of Words

I found most scholars occupied with the image of knowledge (*sura al-ʿilm*) without understanding its reality (*ḥaqiqa*) and substance (*maqṣūd*).

The reciter of the Noble Qur'ān is occupied with the methods of recitation (*riwāyāt*), busying himself with the irregular ones (*shawādh*), thinking that it's the recitation (*talāwa*) itself that is desired without considering the Power of the Speaker (*ʿaẓma al-mutakkalim*), or the threats and promises that the Qur'ān contains. He may think that memorising the Qur'ān protects him, so you find him taking sins lightly. If he understood, he would know that he is more accountable than those who do not recite the Qur'ān.

The ḥadīth scholar (*muḥadith*) collects routes of narrations (*jamʿ al-ṭuruq*) and memorises chains of transmission (*asānīd*) without pondering upon the meaning of the text (*manqūl*). He believes that he preserved ḥadīths for people and hopes to be saved with that (alone). Perhaps he takes sins lightly, thinking that whatever he did will avail him.

The jurist (*faqīh*) believes that since he learned the art of intellectual reasoning that strengthens his arguments (*jidāl*)—and the cases (*masā'il*) in which he knows the verdict—he has achieved what gives people his legal opinion, which will raise his status and remove his sins.

He may aggressively attack sins thinking that this will benefit him. He may not have memorised the Qur'ān or learned the ḥadīth and has understood they prohibit sins. In addition to being ignorant of them, he suffers from love of fame (*ḥub al-riyāsah*) and leadership, love of winning arguments (*īthār al-ghalba fi'l-jadl*) causing his heart to be harder (*qaṣwa al-qalb*).

Most people are like that since the image of knowledge is their craft, and it makes them arrogant (*kibr*) and prone to foolishness (*ḥamāqa*).

Some narrators tell the story of an old man who spent his life learning many religious sciences, that he was seduced in his later years with a sin upon which he insisted and with which he challenged Allāh. His status almost spoke (as if to say), 'My knowledge protects me from the evil I am doing and leaves no trace of it.'

As if he was certain of his own salvation (*najāt*) and had no trace of fear (*kawf*) or regret (*nadm*) of sins.

The narrator states: He changed towards the end of his life and was accompanied by poverty (*faqr*), yet faced hardships without stopping his ugly ways. Until one day a few *Kirats*[21] were given to him in charity, so he became shy and said, 'O my Lord! To this extent?'

The narrator continued, 'I marveled at his unawareness, how he forgot Allāh Almighty but still wanted His sustenance, maintenance and abundance of provision (*wasʿat-al-rizq*).' As if he never heard Allāh's saying,

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[21] A unit of measurement of the area of an agricultural land = 175 m2

وَأَلَّوِ ٱسْتَقَٰمُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

> "And [Allāh revealed] that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant provision."
> [*al-Jinn* (72):16]

Or did not know that sins block the doors of provision (*abwāb al-rizq*), and that whoever neglects the Commands of Allāh is neglected by Allāh.

I have thus, never seen such useless knowledge, for when the scholar slips he becomes very regretful, but this one is persistent and not disturbed by his sins—as if his knowledge permitted him to do as he pleases or that he had the right to permit and forbid in this religion. He quickly became ill and died in the ugliest state.

The narrator said, 'I saw yet another old man who attained the image of knowledge, which did not benefit him. He never avoided any sin within his reach. Whenever he was faced with a matter of fate that he did not like, he objected and blamed the One who decreed it. He lived the most unpleasant life and held the ugliest belief, until he passed away.'

These people did not understand the meaning of knowledge. Knowledge (*ʿilm*) is not the images of words, but rather to understand the purpose behind them, which instills awe (*khashya*) and fear (*kawf*) of Allāh, gratitude (*shukr*) for the blessing of knowledge and awareness of the responsibility of such knowledge.

We ask Allāh Almighty for an awareness that makes us understand the purpose and have full consciousness of the One being worshipped (*maʿbūd*).

We seek refuge in Allāh from the way of the laypeople who ascribe to labels of *'scholars'*, yet not instructed by the knowledge they carry; who know but do not apply their knowledge and are arrogant with people with what they do not do.

They chose the fleeting of worldly pleasures when they were forbidden to do so. They were overpowered by their habits and not disciplined by the knowledge they learn. They are only better than the ignorant laypeople,

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَٰهِرًا مِّنَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَٰفِلُونَ

> "They know what is apparent of the worldly life, but they, of the Hereafter, are unaware."
>
> [*al-Rūm* (30):7]

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-NINE

Jurisprudence Needs All Types of Sciences

It is desirable for the jurist (*faqīh*) to learn a portion of each science (*funn*), such as history (*ṭārīq*), ḥadīth, linguistics (*lugha*) and so on, for jurisprudence (*fiqh*) needs all sciences (*'ulūm*). So let him acquire an important part of each science.

I saw a jurist who said, 'Al-Shiblī and Shurayk the Jurist met', so I marveled how he did not know the many years that were between them.

Another said in a debate, 'The marriage of Fāṭimah and 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) was singular for 'Alī, which is why he gave her the burial bath.'

I told him, 'Woe to you! Don't you know he married Umāmah, the daughter of Zaynab, who was the niece of Fāṭimah', so he was speechless.

I saw in the *'Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn'* of Al-Ghazālī some amazing confusion of ḥadīths and histories, so I gathered some of the crudest examples in a book.

He mentioned in his book, *'Al-Mustadhiri'* that he presented to Al-Mustadhir Billāh, that Sulaymān Ibn 'Abdu'l-Mālik sent for Abū Hāzim and asked him, 'Send me some of your breakfast.' He sent him some fried bran, which he ate and then had intercourse with his wife. She gave birth to 'Abdu'l-'Azīz, who then had his child, 'Umar.

This is clumsy because he made 'Abdu'l-'Azīz the son of Sulaymān ibn 'Abdu'l-Malik, meaning that Sulaymān is 'Umar's grandfather, when he was his cousin.

Abū'l Ma'alī Al-Juwaynī said towards the end of his book, *'Al-Shamil fil Usul'* that, 'A group of trustworthy narrators stated that Al-Hallaj, Al-Jabba'i Al-Qarmatī and Ibn Al-Muqaffa' agreed to overthrow regimes, spread corruption in the Kingdom and appease the hearts. Each of them went to a certain place; Al-Jabba'ī went to Al-Ahsa, Ibn Al-Muqaffa' went deep into Turkic land, and Al-Ḥallaj resided in Baghdad. His two companions judged that he would perish and fail to achieve the purpose because the people of Baghdad were immune to being tricked, and had insight and acumen

I said, 'Had this man or those from whom he narrated from knew history, he would have realised that Al-Ḥallaj did not live in the same period as Ibn Al-Muqaffa', because Ibn Al-Muqaffa' was sentenced to death by Al-Manṣūr, and was killed in the year 144H. While Abū Sa'īd Al-Jabba'ī Al-Qarmatī was born in 268H, and Al-Ḥallaj was killed in 309H. Therefore, the times of Al-Qarmatī and Al-Ḥallaj are close to one another, but that is not the case for Ibn Al-Muqaffa'.

It is thus necessary for every man of knowledge to encompass other sciences and acquire a portion thereof, because every science is connected to another.

How unpleasant it is when a ḥadīth scholar is asked about a matter but is unable to answer because he was occupied with gathering the routes of transmission. Similarly, how unpleasant it is when a jurist is asked about the meaning of a ḥadīth when he has no idea about the ḥadīth's authenticity or meaning.

We ask Allāh Almighty for a strong resolve that is not satisfied with shortcomings, with His blessing and kindness.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY

The Resolve of Early Scholars

The early scholars' resolve (*himma*) was strong (*'āliya*), as evidenced by their literature reflecting the fruit of their lives. Much of their books however, were wiped out or lost because the resolve of students grew weaker, so they started requesting summaries of original works and stopped caring for the larger detailed books.

They then confined themselves to what they study thereof, so the books were forgotten and no longer copied. The path for the pursuer of perfection in knowledge (*kāmil al-'ilm*) is to read the books that remain neglected.

He should also read frequently because he will witness the strength of knowledge (*'ulūm al-quwa*) and resolve of those people, motivating him and strengthening his own resolve (*'azīma*) for glory, for no book is devoid of benefit (*fā'ida*).

I seek refuge in Allāh from the common ways of those who live amongst us; we cannot find within them the type of resolve the beginner needs to follow or abstinence (*wara'*) of the ascetic (*zāhid*) that benefit.

I urge you to follow the lives of the early scholars, read their books and stories because the more you read from them, the more you will be able to see them. As someone said:

> I could not see the lands with my eyes
> maybe I can see them with my ears

If I may talk about myself, I never get enough of reading; when I see a book I have never seen before, it is as if I have found a treasure. I have looked at the record of the endowed books in the school of *madhahib*, which contained around six thousand volumes—from the record of Abū Ḥanīfah, Al-Ḥumaydī; our own Shaikh 'Abdu'l-Wahhab, Ibn Nāṣir and Abū Muḥammad Al-Khasshab that were many—and any other book I can find.

If I said that I have read twenty thousand volumes, it would be less than the real number. I benefitted from them by following the lives of those people and the strength of their resolves (*himma*), their memorization (*hifẓ*), worship (*'ibadah*) and the wonders (*gharā'ib*) of their knowledge to a degree that cannot be realised by someone who does not read.

Therefore, I started to disparage the condition of people and belittle the resolves of students, praise be to Allāh.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-ONE

Ignoring the Intellect in Consideration of Deduction is Negligence

A human has nothing more valuable than his own life, so I marvel at those who risk it and expose it to destruction.

The reason for this is having lack of intellect and poor judgment. There are some who expose it to danger for the sake of praise. Someone may for example, go to hunt a lion, or may travel to the Iwan of Khosrow to be called *'shrewd'*, or he who walk for thirty leagues. If he dies, the soul for which money is desired, is gone.

More amazing is the one who risks his life while being unaware, such as developing anger that leads to murder of another Muslim, so he quills his anger by being thrown in Hell.

Even more amazing are the Jews and the Christians, for when one of them reaches the age of discernment, it is necessary for them to recognise the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ), and if he (learns about him yet) neglects that and dies in that state, he spends eternity in Hell.

I spoke to one of them and said, 'Woe to you for risking eternal punishment. We believe in your Prophet [Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*)] and accept that if a Muslim believed in Muḥammad (ﷺ) while disbelieving in yours or rejecting the (divine origin of the) Torah, he would spend eternity in Hell, so there is no difference between us. We believe in his truthfulness and his Book. And we would not be ashamed if we met him. If he admonished us for not adhering to the Sabbath for example, the Sabbath is a secondary matter and therefore does not merit eternal punishment.'

The head of those people told me, 'We do not ask you for such; the Sabbath is only obligatory for the children of Isrā'īl.'

I said, 'Then according to your agreement, we are safe while you are bound to perish; exposing your souls to eternal punishment.'

It is very astonishing for someone to neglect considering what could entail eternal punishment. More astonishing than all is the state of those who deny the existence of the Creator; he sees the perfection of creation and yet he says, 'There's no creator.'

The reason for all of this is the lack of intellect and neglecting its function in consideration and deduction.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-TWO

The Dangers of Revealing Secrets

The sane person should not reveal a secret (*ifshā' al-sirr*) until he knows that revealing it will not cause harm. It is known that the reason for revealing secrets is relieving oneself of such burden, which is a short-term pain that can be endured.

Perhaps someone reveals a secret to his wife that she then reveals upon divorce, causing his ruin. Perhaps he reveals it to a friend, causing competition or envy. Perhaps it is revealed to a commoner who is more foolish than to be trusted.

Perhaps a revealed secret is the cause of one's own destruction.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-THREE

The Seeker of Pearls must Dive in the Sea

No one goes to the depths of pursuing knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿilm*) except the lover of knowledge (*ʿāshiq al-ʿilm*), and the lover (*ʿāshiq*) must endure distress. Such preoccupation prevents one from earning his living, and as they have no reliance upon rulers and friends, poverty becomes their companion.

Virtues calls upon them, saying,

هُنَالِكَ ٱبْتُلِيَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾

> "There, the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking."
>
> [*al-Aḥzāb* (33):11]

Whenever the self fears a trial (*ibtilāʾ*), it says:

Do not think glory is a date-fruit you eat
You will not reach glory until you lick the Aloe Vera extract

When [Imām] Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal chose to pursue knowledge he was in a state of poverty (*faqr*), yet he kept occupied with it for forty years without getting married. The poor must endure such poverty as Aḥmad did.

Who is able to endure what he did? He refused to accept fifty thousand, and was accustomed to eating pickles and using salt as filling.

Good reputation did not come to him randomly nor did the feet frequent his grave except for a wondrous reason. What praise it is that filled the horizon, a beauty that adorned the universe and honour that erased every indignity in this worldly life, yet the rewards of the Hereafter are without description.

If you look at the graves of most scholars, no one knows or visits them. They compromised, justified and consorted with the rulers, so the blessing of knowledge was taken away, the honour disappeared and they arrived upon death with regret—what unavoidable regret and what irreparable loss! The company of pleasures was as a blink of an eye and sorrow was permanent.

So have patience (*ṣabr*) O seeker of virtues (*faḍā'il*), because the pleasure of comfort (*ladha al-rāḥa*) of whims (*hawā*) and idleness (*baṭāla*) is erased, with only grief remaining.

Imām Al-Shāfiʿī said:

> O soul, it is but days' worth of patience
> whose period is as long as a dream
> O soul, give up the worldly life
> and leave it, because [real] life is ahead

As for the poverty-stricken scholar (*'ālim al-faqīr*); would he prefer to be granted property from a ruler in exchange for not knowing what you have learned? No! I don't think the aware would allow you to prefer so.

As a scholar, if you come across a good idea or an amazing meaning behind a matter, you find a pleasure with which no physical pleasures (*ladhāt al-ḥasiya*) can compete.

Whoever is given to physical pleasures is deprived of what others have of knowledge and acumen. They share the basic components of life, but what remains is only the excess of leaving what usually does not hurt.

They lie mostly at risk at the doors of the Hereafter, and the scholars are mostly safe. Consider therefore, the consequences and repress the urge of laziness that disheartens from virtues. Many scholars who died after being negligent are buried in a state of regret and sorrow.

A man saw our Shaikh, Ibn Al-Zaghwanī in a dream, and the Shaikh told him, 'The most apparent and common thing you have is being unaware (*ghafla*), and the most common thing we have is regret (*nadāma*).'

Escape (from negligence), may Allāh lead you to success, before being held and break the contract of lustful desires and the defrauding of the eyes. Know that virtues are not attained with comforts and negligence (*tafrīṭ*) in small things deface the virtues (*maḥāsin*).

Seize the opportunity while you are still breathing and the Angel of Death (*malak al-mawt*) is yet to come, and go with a strong resolve (*'azīma 'azm*).

When he decides, his resolve appears between his eyes
and he stops mentioning consequences
He consults, in his affairs, none other than himself
and accepts no companion other than the sword's handle

Refuse the worldly life and its followers. May Allāh bless the worldly life for its people; we are the rich and they are the poor.

As Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham said, 'If the kings and their progeny knew what we have (of knowledge and awareness and contentment), they would have fought against us with swords over it.'

People of this worldly life do not nearly have a mouthful except from an unlawful or a doubtful source. If one of them does not indulge in that himself, his peer or agent does, and he does not care for the lack of their faith.

If they build a house, they exploit workers, if they collect money, it is from invalid sources. Each one of them is afraid of being murdered, removed or slandered—this being their defects.

As for us (scholars), we eat what is apparently permitted by the *Sharīʿah*, we fear no enemy nor does our jurisdiction move or becomes removable. Honor is for us in this life and not for them. People gathering around us, kissing our hands and glorifying us is abundant. And in the Hereafter, we will differ from them, if Allāh Wills.

If the people of the worldly life turn their heads, they will realise the extent of our advantage over them. If their hands are too stingy to give us, the pleasure of abstinence is better, and the bitterness of their favours is not matched by what is taken. It is merely some food below other foods, some clothing below other clothing, and this lasts for merely a few days.

It is astonishing how someone—whose spirit is honoured to pursue knowledge, which is pursued only by honored spirits—can waste it on someone whose honour only comes from money, and whose pride only comes from being in power.

Abū Ya'la Al-Alawī said:

Perhaps some people have skin disease
that was turned into a blaze
The ugly money hid their flaws
you will see, when it goes, what it was hiding

May Allāh awaken us from slumber, grant us the thinking of the aware, help us operate according to knowledge (*'ilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*).

For He is Near (*qarīb*) and Responsive (*mujīb*).

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FOUR

Give The Body What it is Used to

One must not force his body to do what it cannot endure because the body is like a riding camel, if one is not gentle with it, it will not deliver him to his destination.

You will see people determined to become ascetic, yet his body is used to luxuries. So he turns away from what his body was used to and allows diseases to frequent him, blocking his path to much worship.

It was said, 'Give each body what it is used to.' The Messenger (ﷺ) was presented with a dhab lizard, and he said, "I find that I have no liking for it, because it is not common in the land of my people."[22]

It is stated in the ḥadīth of *Hijrah* that Abū Bakr (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) found a shady area for the Messenger (ﷺ) , placed a piece of fur for him on the ground, and added some water to the milk cup until it cooled down.

The Messenger (ﷺ) came to some people and said, "If you have any water that has remained overnight in a skin (should use it), or sip (from a streamlet)."[23]

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[22] Bukhārī, #5391 and Muslim, #1946 on the authority of Khālid Ibn Walīd (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

He (ﷺ) used to eat chicken meat,[24] and it is narrated in the Ṣaḥīḥ that he used to love sweet fruit and honey,[25] but if he could not find them, he ate what he could find.

By Allāh, there are some among Arabs and desert folk who are not affected by coarseness in food and clothing. They are not harmed by remaining on their (lawful) habits. As for those who are used to luxury, if they change their habits, their bodies will need adjusting and their worship will be affected and decrease.

Ibn Sirin's house was never empty of sweet fruits. Sufyan Al-Thawrī used to travel and carry with him grilled lamb and waltz.

Rabi'ah said, 'I see no shame for a body that desires worshipping Allāh to eat waltz.'

Therefore, whoever is used to luxury must be gentle with himself where possible. I learned this from self-experience as I was raised in luxury; so when I started abstinence and leaving my desires, it caused me an illness that prevented me from much worship.

I used to recite five *Juz'*[26] of the noble Qur'ān. Then one day I ate some bad food, and I could not recite those five *Juz'*s on that day. So I said, 'If a morsel helps one recite five *Juz'* where each letter equals ten good deeds, the mere eating of such morsel is a great deed. Similarly, a food that harms the body and causes it to miss good deeds must be avoided.'

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[23] Reference already mentioned.

[24] Bukhārī, #6721 on the authority of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*).

[25] Reference already mentioned.

[26] A single *Juz'* is one thirtieth of the noble Qur'an.

The Messenger (ﷺ) saw a man from his Companions who came to him, and his outlook was changed by abstinence; he said to him, 'Who told you to do this?'

The wise gives his body the food that suits it, as the warrior cleans the horse's barley.

Do not think that I recommend eating everything that's desired or frequenting pleasurable food. I only entice eating what preserves the soul and forbid eating what harms the body. As for excessive eating, it causes sleep, and a full-stomach blinds the heart and weakens the body.

So, understand what I mention for moderation is the way.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-FIVE

The Fool Brings Ordeals upon Himself

When the intellect is wholesome, one's intelligence and acumen are strong and he is able to navigate through troubles.

Al-Ḥasan said, 'If the thief is smart, his arm will not be severed; as for the fool, he only brings ordeals upon himself.'

Here are the brothers of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*); they took him away from his father so that they can be closer to him instead, not knowing that his grief will occupy him and his conviction of their guilt will incite his hatred for them. They threw him in the pit, and said,

يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ ٱلسَّيَّارَةِ

"Some travelers will pick him up"
[*Yūsuf* (12):10],

Unaware that when he is picked up, the news will spread reaching his father! Then they said, "The wolf ate him," and they brought his stained shirt intact. If they had torn it apart, it would have been more plausible.

When they went to him seeking food, he said,

قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم

"Bring me a brother of yours."
[*Yusuf* (12):59],

had they the acumen, they would have known that the King of Egypt has no need for their brother. He then held Benyamin on a proof and said, "This measure tells me that such-and-such." All the while they still remained unaware.

When Ya'qub (*'alayhi as-salām*) sensed these things, he told them,

اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِن يُوسُفَ

"go and find out about Yūsuf."
[*Yusuf* (12):87],

Because Yūsuf was prohibited by revelation to inform his father of his existence. That is why when they met, he told him, 'Why did you not write to me?' He said, 'Jibrīl (*'alayhi as-salām*) prohibited me.'

Therefore, since he was prohibited to inform him of his existence—in order for the trial to continue—what he did to his brother was like an alert, similar to one who indirectly alludes concerning a proposal to a woman who is in her waiting period.[27]

By Allāh, Ya'qūb cried for witnessing Yūsuf's intelligence, not just for seeing his image.

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[27] The period when the woman is not allowed to remarry, following her divorce or her husband's death.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SIX

Begging is From the Worst Humiliation

Humans are subjected to needs that distract their attention. The eyes require pleasant visions, the tongue requires talking, the stomach requires food, the sexual organs require copulation and the (natural) habit requires attaining of wealth.

We were commanded to focus our attention towards the Hereafter, yet whims distract us from it. So what can be done when the self is drawn by necessary needs of providing for oneself and one's family?

Man wakes early to go to the market and consider his livelihood. He uses his intellect to acquire for his necessary needs, how then can he have any focus left? Particularly if greed overtakes him in one of its forms; leading him to fleet through life that takes him from his market to his grave. How can he then acquire knowledge, enact good deeds and maintain sincere intentions or seek other virtues?

Whoever is given self-awareness must strive to attain virtues. If he was an ascetic without a family, he should restrict himself to little work.

Al-Sabtī used to work on Saturdays only, and have enough for his whole week.

If one has surplus money, he should give it to someone who's religious and trustworthy for investment purposes. If he has a family, he should focus his attention providing for them—which is a form of worship—or to purchase real estate that he can lease part thereof to cover his expenses. He should try to lower personal rations as much as possible in order to use some of it in pursuit of the Hereafter. Otherwise, he will be distracted with his negligence and regret it in his grave.

The worst case for a jurist is whenever he gathers the resolve to work for the Hereafter, he is distracted by providing for his family. He may even need to beg from oppressors, taking from doubtful sources and thus, compromising his dignity. This must be taken into consideration regarding expenditure. If something happens, he must manage it.

The shortness of life must not drive him to spend what he has. The Messenger (ﷺ) said, "It is better to leave your heirs independent of means than to leave them poor and holding out their hands to people."[28]

The worst humiliation of all is to beg from the stingy and the ruler. Therefore, one must manage his affairs, reduce rations and preserve his dignity, for indeed life is short. Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was sent money and so his son asked him to accept it. He responded, 'I will consult Allāh.' In the morning he said to his son Ṣaliḥ, 'I have decided not to accept it.'

In addition, it was a generous offering and it came to him from many ways, unlike today.

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[28] Reference already mentioned.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SEVEN

Solitude Leads to a Good Life

Solitude (*uzla*) from people is a means towards leading a good life. Mingling with people must be measured, so indulge the enemy and win him over as he may scheme against you and ruin you.

Be kind to those who are unkind to you, accomplish your affairs in secrecy and make people your acquaintances and not your friends.

The rarest of things is to have a friend, for a friend should be of equal status. If you befriend the laypeople, you will not benefit from them, due to their general poor manners, lack of knowledge and discipline. If you befriend an equal or one of similar standing, he will envy you.

If you are conscious, you will sense from his words and actions evidence of his envy,

فَلَعَرَفْتَهُم بِسِيمَٰهُمْ

"You will surely know them by the tone of [their] speech."
[*Muḥammad* (47):30]

If you want confirmation of this, then send someone to him and you will realize he will only speak what is in his heart. If you want to live (a long and happy life), keep away from the envier, for witnesses your blessing and could envy you for it. If you are forced to associate with him, do not reveal your secrets to him, do not consult him and do not be allured by his flattery or religiosity and worship he displays in front of you—because envy overcomes these traits.

You know that envy drove Cane (*Kabīl*) to murder, and Yūsuf's brother sold him for a cheap price.

Abū ʿĀmir was a monk and a renowned worshipper, and ʿAbdullah ibn Ubayy was a chief among his people, but they were both driven by their envy (*ḥasd*) of the Messenger (ﷺ) to hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and deviation from the right path (*tark al-ṣawab*).

You should not wish for your envier any punishment more than the state his in. He is in a continual state of discontent, where nothing satisfies him except the removal of others' blessing. The more your blessing endures, the longer his agony extends, which is not a way to live real life.

The reason why the life of the residents of Paradise is delightful is the removal of hatred (*ghill*) and envy (*ḥasd*) from their hearts. Otherwise, they would have envied one another and lived in distress.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-EIGHT

Being Disheartened in Pursuit of Knowledge Fails to Achieve One's Desire

Whoever walks accompanied by his intellect, avoids the path of whims and weighs consequences thereof. He is able to enjoy life and a good reputation, which causes him to forego any of his desired pleasures.

This is clarified from two perspectives:

First: If he inclined towards desires of copulation and frequently enacted it, his flame of pleasure decreases and burns out causing him to abandon any (further) desired pleasure. If he moderated his desire and used it wisely, he would find it more pleasurable because of the length between intercourses allowing the flame of passion to persist.

Similarly, whoever cheats or betrays in his transactions, people would stop dealing with him, so he would miss profitable trades from regular transactions due to a single instance of betrayal. If he was known to be trustworthy however, people would continue dealing with him and allow him to increase profit.

Second: Whoever fears Allāh and occupies himself with knowledge or asceticism is granted access to much permitted pleasure. Yet whoever is disheartened by being lazy in seeking knowledge or by turning away from asceticism, will only attain little pleasure.

Allāh (the Almighty) said,

﴿وَأَلَّوِ ٱسْتَقَٰمُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقًا ١٦﴾

> "And [Allāh revealed] that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant provision."
> [*al-Jinn* (72):16]

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-NINE

Life of People of Truth

All deeds must be done for the sake of Allāh. He has eliminated your need for any of the creation (*makhlūq*) and brought you all goodness (*khayr*).

Beware of turning away from Him in order to fulfill a whim (*hawā*) or for the sake of any of the creation, because He will turn things against you and make you forego your desire.

The ḥadīth states, "Whoever satisfied people through the dissatisfaction of Allāh, Allāh will turn those who praise him against him."[29]

The best life is the life of one who conscientiously lives with Allāh (the Almighty). If someone asks, "How does he live with Him?"

I say, "By adhering to His commands and refraining from His prohibitions; preserving His limits, accepting His decree, showing etiquette in solitude (*khawla*), making frequent remembrance of Him and having a heart clear of objecting to His decisions."

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[29] Tirmidhī, #2414 on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī.*

If you are in need, ask from Him; if he gives, then it is good—otherwise you must accept it and know that He did not withhold out of miserliness (*bukhl*), but out of concern in looking out for your best interest.

Do not stop asking Him because it is a form of worship; and when you persist in asking, He will instill within you love (*maḥabbah*) for Him and a true dependence (*ṣidq al-tawakkul*) on Him. This love will guide you towards the purpose and will yield its fruits; leading you to live the life of people of truth.

No other life is better as most people stumble around their lives, hiding worldly reasons and inclining towards them with their hearts. They exhaust themselves in earning a living with extreme caution, incline towards people and are dismayed upon missing any desires. His Decree will come to pass unconcerned with one's dissatisfaction, for nothing happens therein except what is fated.

These people missed being near to Allāh, loving Him and displaying noble etiquette with Him; such a life is the life of animals.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY

Whoever Harnesses Intellect is Safe

I looked into the wisdom of food and drink, clothing and marriage—I came to the realization that since man is created from sources that decay; such as water, dust, fire and air, and his survival is dependent on heat (and humidity that is removed by heat), he must have something to compensate such decay.

Since flesh is only compensated by flesh, the religious law permitted slaughtering of animals to provide nutrition for the better species. And since his body needs clothing, and he has the intellect and ability to manufacture what protects him from cotton and wool, he was not given protection from other than his own skin. This is unlike animals who are unable to cover their own skin, and instead were compensated with feathers, hair and fur.

Moreover, since the death of the human and the animal is inescapable, the desire for copulation was inculcated to produce offspring. The intellect was enticed to pursue such needs, necessitating eating and drinking according to one's needs, so that one can enjoy his health.

It is calamitous to solely seek the pleasure of food, even when it is without taste by mere gluttony. And such is also the case with clothing and copulation.

It is wise to amass and save money for any unexpected need that may arise, and it is folly to spend money without need. A need may arise that cannot be fulfilled resulting in impacting one's health or dignity by requesting it from miscreants.

It is also very undesirable to consume oneself in copulation for pursuit of seeking pleasure, while forgetting that it brings loss of power and, in case of unlawful copulation, punishment.

Therefore, whoever inclined to managing the intellect is safe in this life and the Hereafter. Whoever shuns its advice causes his ruin. Let everyone understand the purpose, wisdom and desire of things.

Whoever does not understand or does not operate according to that measured understanding is as a most ignorant commoner, even if he was a scholar.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-ONE

Mingling with Rulers

One marvels at someone who has a measure of intellect (*'aql*) or a shred of religiosity, that he prefers mingling with rulers. By associating with them or working with them, he is in fear of being removed, targeted or much worse. He will not be able to work except according to their dictates.

If they command him to do commit an unlawful deed, he will not be able to decline without repercussions and thus, risks selling his Hereafter for this worldly life.

His fear prevents him from carrying out Allāh's order and reverts to invoking Allāh before carrying them out.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-TWO

The Wise take Things into Consideration

It is a huge mistake to share negative opinions about a person who has been removed from power or sphere of influence, for there is no guarantee he will not return to a position of power and seek retribution.

One must generally not display animosity towards anyone because the disparaged could rise and the one ignored can find power. Contrary to popular notion, hatred for enemies should be hidden, even if retribution against them became possible because forgiving is retribution itself, as it is a form of humiliation for them.

One must be kind to everyone, particularly to those who can reach positions of power. And one should be at the service of those who have been removed as they can return to former positions.

We have narrated that a man asked permission to enter upon the Chief Judge, Ibn Abū Dāwūd, and said "Abū Ja'far is at the door."

When he heard that, he was delighted and said, "Let him in."

He entered, and the judge got up, met him, honoured him and gave him five thousand and walked him out.

He was asked, “You do all this to a commoner?”

He replied, “I used to be poor, and he was my friend. I came to him one day and told him I was hungry. He asked me to sit down and he went out, then returned with grilled meat, sweet fruit and bread, and asked me to eat. I said, “Eat with me,” and he said, “No.” I said, “I swear I will not eat until you eat with me,” so he ate until I saw blood coming out of his mouth.” I asked, “What is this?” He said, “An illness.” I said, “By Allāh, you must tell me.”

He said, “When you came to me, I had nothing, but my teeth were clamped with a golden tape, so I removed it, sold it and bought (the food) with its price.”

Should I not reward someone like this?

On the contrary, Ibn Al-Zayyat was the minister of Al-Wathiq, and he used to put down Al-Mutawakkil, when the latter became the Caliph, he tortured him in different ways.

Similarly, Ibn Al-Jazarī used to have no respect for Al-Mustarshid before his appointment, and he was subjected to ordeals after he reached power.

The wise is one who considers consequences, imagines all possibilities, and works according to wisdom.

Above all that is to visualise death approaching at any moment, because it can come suddenly and without a preceding illness. Therefore, the wise is one who prepares for it, behaves so as not to be regretful upon its arrival and exercises caution against sins, for they are like a watchful enemy.

Save and collect good deeds for yourself because they are like a true friend that helps in hard times.

It is most important for the believer to learn that the more he increases in virtue, the higher his rank in Paradise will be, and vice versa.

He may enter Paradise in a lower rank while others are higher, but he will remain satisfied and will not feel any shortcoming.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-THREE

Lack of Patience against Desires Leads to Ruin

When I was writing my book *'Al-Muntadhim'*, detailing the history of kings and nations, I got to know an in-depth history of people such as kings, ministers, authors, jurists, ḥadīth scholars, ascetics and others. I found that the worldly life played many of them in a way that nullified their faith. So much so, that they ended up denying the punishment of the Hereafter.

Some rulers kill, confiscate, cut and imprison with a lawful right, and then dive into the sea of sins as if they have the final say on their destiny, or that were could guarantee themselves safety from punishment.

Perhaps they imagined that their preservation of their subjects would protect them, forgetting that the Messenger (ﷺ) was told,

قُلْ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

> "Say, 'Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.'"
>
> [*al-Zumar* (39):13]

Some pseudo-scholars were involved in sins to attain short-term goals and were not benefitted by knowledge.

We have also seen some ascetics who deviated to fulfill their desires because life caught them in a trap, and people are like birds; the bird desires the food grain while forgetting the trap.

Most people forget their return in their pursuit of their short-lived pleasures, so they became companions to their whims and ignored the calling of the intellect. They sell much good for little pleasure and in in return deserve—for these disparaged desires—a great punishment.

If one of them meets his death he says, "I wish I never were. I wish I were dust." Then he is told, "Now?" What a great pity for a missed that cannot be caught, a mortgaged that cannot be released, a regret that has no end, and a tortured too arrogant to believe in Allāh!

The intellect only benefits those who take heed of it, for you cannot depend and accept its advice without resolve and patience against desires.

Among the ruler, take a look at 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz (Allāh be pleased with them); and among scholars, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (Allāh have mercy on his soul), and among ascetics, 'Uways Al-Qarnī. They gave wisdom its due and understood the purpose of existence.

Those who perished never perished except because for their lack of patience against desires. Some of them unsurprisingly, may not have believed in resurrection and punishment. What is astonishing is to see a believer with sure certainty, while his certainty is of no use to him—who understands consequences, but does not benefit from his intellect.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-FOUR

Combining Knowledge and Deeds is Difficult

Whoever is given a strong resolve (*himma ʿāliya*) suffers according to its strength, as the poet says:

If the spirits were high
the bodies suffer in pursuit of their goals

And as the other says:

Each body has a reason for decay
and mine stems from my strong resolve

One having a strong resolve pursues all types of sciences and does not confine himself to certain ones. He pursues each science to the extent that the body cannot bear. He then sees that deeds are equally desirable, so he strives in prayer in the night and fasting in the days; combining this with the pursuit of knowledge (*ʿilm*) is difficult (*ṣaʿb*).

He then proceeds to abstinence while having necessary needs. He begins to enjoy selflessness and is unable to stand avarice; yet generosity requires spending and his dignity prevents him from earning from doubtful and degrading sources.

If generosity was his nature, he becomes economically challenged, and his body and family will see the effects of this. If he was to withhold, it would go against his nature.

Generally speaking, he must endure hardship while combining the opposites so that he is forever in an unending effort and unceasing exhaustion.

Additionally, if he accomplishes sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) in deeds (*aʿmāl*), his tiredness and exhaustion will increase. How then can this be compared to one with a weak resolve? If he was a jurist and was asked about a ḥadīth, he would respond, "I do not know," and if he was a ḥadīth scholar and was asked about an issue, he would respond, "I do not know," unconcerned that he may be labeled as *'negligent'*.

The one with a strong resolve sees any shortcoming in a science as scandalous, which reveals his flaws. Yet the one with a weak resolve is indifferent to people's praise, does not shy away from asking them and is insensitive to rejection; unlike the strong-resolved one.

The strong-resolved one's tiredness entails comfort, and the weak-resolved one's comfort entails discomfort and disparagement, if one were to understand.

Life is a race to the heights of virtues, so the strong-resolved must not slacken in his race. If he surpasses, then that is the goal, but if his horse stumbled despite his striving, he is not to blame.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-FIVE

Self-Confidence with One’s Knowledge is a Grave Curse

Self-satisfaction and conviction of one’s knowledge is a grave curse and a prevalent calamity. You see the Jew and the Christian believing they are right, without even considering the evidence of Prophethood of our Prophet (ﷺ).

If he hears what softens his heart, such as the miraculous Qur’ān, he runs away so as not to hear. This is the same case for anyone with a persistent whim, either because it is the way of his ancestors or because he was convinced upon first impressions, without considering the opposing views nor discussing it with scholars to discover his mistakes.

An example of this are the Khawarij[30] against the Leader of the Believers, ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhumu*), because they liked their own opinions and did not consult those with knowledge.

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[30] A group that broke away from mainstream Muslim body and revolted against the Caliph ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu*) after he agreed arbitration with Mu‘awiyah (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu*) during the Great Fitnah. They later assassinated ‘Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu*).

When ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿAbbās (*radiyAllāhu ʿanhumā*) met them, he clarified their faulty logic and beliefs, so two thousands of them renounced their stance and came back to the fold.

Among those who did not renounce their whims was Ibn Muljam. He believed his ideas were the truth, so he considered the killing of ʿAlī (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) to be lawful and believed that to be his religion, so much so that when his limbs were cut off he did not mind.

When they wanted to cut out his tongue, he was distressed and said, 'How can I remain an hour in this life without mentioning the name of Allāh?' There is no remedy for the likes of this!

Al-Ḥajjaj also used to say, 'I do not hope for good except after death.' This is what he said when he had killed countless people unjustly, including Saʿīd ibn Jubayr.

ʿAbdu'l-Wahhab and Ibn Naṣir Al-Ḥāfiẓ convey from Al-Mubarak ibn ʿAbdu'l-Jabbar, from Al-Husayn Ibn Muḥammad Al-Nusaybī, from Ismaʿil Ibn Saʿīd, from Abū Bakr Ibn Al-Anbarī, from Abū ʿĪsa Al-Khatlī, from Abū Yaʿla, from Al-Aṣmaʿī, from Abū'l-ʿĀṣim, from ʿAbbad ibn Kathir, that Qahdam said, 'Thirty three thousand people were found in Al-Ḥajjaj's prisons; none of them deserved having their arm severed, being killed or being crucified.'

I say: Most rulers kill with extreme (and warped) thinking they are allowed to do so. Had they asked the scholars, they would have clarified things for them.

Most commoners are daring in committing sins and subsequently depend on divine forgiveness while forgetting punishment.

Some of them depend on being from *Ahlu'l-Sunnah*, or having performed good deeds. All this is out of strong ignorance.

One must strive to know the proof, not settle for doubts and not be confident in his own knowledge.

We ask Allāh for safety from all curses.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-SIX

Woe to Those who Recognise Punishment yet Prefer Pleasure

Beware that the repayment is inescapable, whether it is for a good deed or a bad deed. It is folly for the sinner to assume that since he does not see a punishment that he is forgiven, since punishment could be delayed.

It is rare that someone commits a sin without being penalised for it. Allāh (the Almighty) said,

مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوٓءًا يُجْزَ بِهِۦ

"Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it."
[*al-Nisa'* (4:)123]

An example of this is when Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) ate the morsel from the tree; and you know what happened to him.

Wahb Ibn Munnabih said, 'Allāh,the Almighty revealed to him[31], "Did I not create you for Myself, house you in My house and make

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[31] Meaning to Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*).

My angels bow down to you, then (how can) you disobey Me and forget the covenant you made to Me? By My honour, if I filled the Earth with people like you, who worship and supplicate to Me day and night, and then they disobeyed me, I will place them in the ranks of the sinners."

Then Jibrīl (*'alayhi as-salām*) removed the crown from his head,[32] Mika'īl (*'alayhi as-salām*) untied the wreath from his forehead, he was pulled by his forelock and brought down (to earth).[33]

Adam then cried for three hundred years on the mountains of India, where his tears flowed in the valleys of its mountains, and the evergreen trees grew over these tears.

Similarly [Prophet] Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*); he took a look at what necessitated his continual regret and crying, until grass sprouted from his tears.

As for [Prophet] Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*), some people sought his arbitration, but he inclined with his whim to one of them, so he was reprimanded and changed in the sight of people. He used to say, "Feed me," and none would feed him.

As for [Prophet] Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*), it is said that he slaughtered a calf in front of its mother, so was therefore punished by separation from Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*).

As for [Prophet] Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), he drew attention to himself; each of his brothers had twelve sons, and he was reduced to having only one.

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[32] Meaning to Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*).

[33] See Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, 1/89

As for [Prophet] Ayyūb (*'alayhi as-salām*), he did not oppose a tyrant king due to some horses that were close to him, so calamity befell him.

As for [Prophet] Yūnus (*'alayhi as-salām*), he left his people without permission, so the whale swallowed him.

Allāh Almighty said to Jeremiah[34], "Your people left that by which I honoured their ancestors. Upon My honour, I will incite against them armies that do not feel pity for their tears."

He said, "O Lord, they are the descendants of your close friend, Ibrahīm, the nation of your chosen one, Mūsā and the people of your Prophet, Dāwūd."

Allāh Almighty revealed to him, "I only honoured Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and Dāwūd for obeying Me. Had they disobeyed Me, I would have put them among the rank of sinners."

A worshipper once looked at a beautiful person, so his teacher told him, 'You will find the punishment for that look!' So after forty years, he forgot the Qur'ān he memorised.

Another said, 'I made fun of a person who lost some of his teeth, so my teeth were scattered, and I looked at a woman who was not lawful for me, so my wife was looked at by whom I did not want.'

An insolent child beat his father and dragged him to some place, so the father exclaimed, 'Stop here! This is where I dragged my father.'

Ibn Sirin said, 'I made fun of a man for becoming bankrupt, so I ended up going went bankrupt.'

There are many such examples.

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[34] Ṭabarāni in *al-Kabīr*, 12/174

One of the strangest things I have heard in this regard is the story of the minister, Ibn Ḥasīr, nicknamed *"Al-Naẓẓām"*. Al-Muqtafī got angry with him and commanded that ten thousand dinars be confiscated from him.

His family entered upon him in a distressed state, saying, 'How can you arrange ten thousand *dinar*?' He replied, 'Neither ten, five, nor four will be taken from me.'

They said, 'How can you be so certain?' He said, 'I was unfair to a man once and obligated him to pay three thousand; so nothing more will be taken from me.' It came to be that he paid three thousand dinar and the Caliph released him and relieved him of the rest.

I can say the same about myself; no calamity, distress or grief befell me except because of a mistake I knew (I made). It was enough for me to say, 'This happened due to such-and-such.' Sometimes, I ponder upon it afterwards and see the punishment.

One must watch out for the punishment of sins, because rarely is one saved from it. Sincerity in repentance is also crucial, it was narrated in that ḥadith, "Nothing catches up to something faster than a new good deed to an old sin."

Besides repentance (*tawbah*), one must be afraid (*khā'if*) of expecting punishment, for Allāh Almighty has accepted the repentance of the Prophets, yet in the ḥadīth of intercession, Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) will exclaim, "My sin,"and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā will exclaim, "My sin."

If someone claims that Allāh's saying

مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوٓءًا يُجْزَ بِهِۦ

"Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it."
[*al-Nisā'* (4):123],

Is a statement indicating that He does not forgive a sinner, but we know that He accepts repentance and forgives sinners.

There are two ways of answering that:

First: It applies only to those who died insisting on the sin, without making repentance, because repentance erases what preceded it.

Second: The statement is absolute—this is the position I choose—as evidenced from text and interpretation.

As for the text, then when this verse was revealed, Abū Bakr (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*) said, 'O Allāh's Messenger! Are we recompensed for everything we do?' He said, "Do you not get sick? Do you not grieve? Are you not hit by misfortune? That is the recompense."[35]

As for the interpretation, if the believer repents from sin and regrets it, his continuous sorrow for his sins is stronger than any punishment.

Therefore, woe to him, who knew the bitterness of punishment and still preferred the pleasure of the sin, even momentarily.

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[35] Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, #69 on the authority of Abū Bakr (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa'l-Tarhīb*, #3430.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-SEVEN

Weigh Your Deeds in Life before the Scales of Hereafter

I contemplated my condition thoroughly; I called it into account before it is called into account [in the Hereafter]. I weighed my deeds before they are weighed, so I found the divine kindness (*lufṭ al-rabani*) surround me since birth until now—kindness (*lufṭ*) after another, hiding (*sitr*) of my defects and forgiveness (*'afu*) of what would otherwise entails punishment (*'aqūba*).

Yet I found [within me] no way to show gratitude (*shukr*) for that except with the tongue. I remembered sins for which if I had been punished, I would have perished quickly, and if some of it had been revealed to people, it would have caused me humiliation.

Do not think that they were from major sins so as not to consider me as lewd. They are ugly sins for someone like me [to commit] that happened with false justifications.

Thus, I say when I pray, 'O Allāh, with Your praise and Your sheltering of me, forgive me.'

Then I requested gratitude (*shukr*) from myself for that, but did not find it appropriate. Yet, I demand my desires that have been decreed and do not demand patience (*ṣabr*) in hardships or gratitude for the blessings from myself.

I started wailing over my shortcomings in praising the Benefactor, and on my pleasure of attaining knowledge (*'ilm*) without applying it. I had hoped to attain the ranks of the great, but the life passed away without reaching the goal.

I then found that Abū'l-Wafā' ibn 'Aqīl had similar wailing, and I liked his wailing, so I wrote it here. He told himself, 'You foolhardy! You organise words to be called *'a debater'*, and the fruit of this is to be called *'a debater'*, just like the swift fighter.

You wasted the dearest and most precious thing, in the eyes of the wise; the days of your life, until you are known among the soon-to-be dead as *'a debater'*. Then, the caller and the called will be forgotten when the hearts are obliterated. That is if it remained until your death, for a more skilled young man may arise, and steal the title from you.'

The wise are occupied with leaving a legacy after death, which is application of knowledge and purified consideration of themselves.

Ugh, to myself when I have written volumes in the fields of knowledge, yet no virtue became attached to it. When debated, it acts high; when advised, it is arrogant, and when the worldly desires flash in the horizon, it flies to it like a vulture and swoops down on it like a crow on a dead body.

I wish it had taken like the desperate takes from dead meat. It hides its defects when mingling with people, but does not shy as Allāh sees it.

If it misses a desire, it is annoyed, and when it is provided with blessings, it is distracted from the Benefactor.

Ugh to me today, above earth, and tomorrow, beneath it!

I swear, the stinking of my body after three days in my grave is less than the stinking of my manners among friends.

I swear, I am amazed at the patience of the Most Generous; how He covers for me as I am being torn apart, and how He gathers me as I am being scattered.

Tomorrow they will say, "The righteous learner scholar died." Were they to know me as I know myself, they would not even bury me.

By Allāh, I will call on myself like someone revealing the enemy's shortcomings. I will wail the wailing of the bereaved [of a child], for I have no one to wail over these hidden calamities and covered traits, that have been hidden by He who knew them.

By Allāh, I do not find a pleasant trait in myself that I can use as an expedient and say, "O Allāh, forgive this sin by this good trait."

By Allāh, I never turned around, except to find from His Kindness that suffices me, and safeguarding that protects me, despite the enemies' domination. I never had a need and extended my hand except He fulfilled it. This is His way with me, when He is the Lord who does not need me, and this is my manner with Him, when I am a servant in need of him.

I have no excuse, and I cannot say, "I did not know," or "I was unaware." By Allāh, He has created me in a sound and proper way, and lit my heart with acumen, so that the hidden and the obscure open to my understanding.

How regretful am I for an unsatisfactory life that has passed!

How deprived am I of the ranks of insightful men! How great is my regret over what I neglected concerning Allāh! How gloating is my enemy!

How disappointed is whoever thought well of me when my organs testify against me!

How forsaken am I upon the display of evidence! By Allāh, Satan laughs at me when I am (considered) the insightful.

O Allāh! I ask You for a pure repentance from this filth and a true awakening to clear the remaining muddiness.

I come to you after the age of fifty, a decayed object. Knowledge refused but to take my hand to honour, and I have no tool except sorrow and regret.

I swear, I did not disobey You out of ignorance of the magnitude of Your blessings, or forgetfulness of Your foregoing generosity, so forgive my preceding deeds."

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-EIGHT

Animosity of Relatives is Difficult (to Bear)

Animosity of relatives is difficult to bear and may last long periods of time, such as the war of Bakr and Taghlub—the sons of Wa'il; and the war of Abs and Zhubian—the sons of Bughaydh; and the war of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj—the sons of Qaylah.

Al-Jahiz said, 'This [last] one lasted for forty years.'

The reason for this is that each of them hated to be surpassed by his peer relative, and envy took hold.

Therefore, whoever has an advantage over his relatives must be humble with them, help them whenever possible and be kind to them so that he may be safe.

A man told the Messenger (ﷺ), 'I have relatives with whom I try to keep the ties of kinship but they sever relations with me.' He said, "It is as if you feed them hot ashes (i.e. they cannot bear your kindness), and you will have support from Allāh as long as you continue to do so."'[36]

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[36] Muslim, #2558 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FORTY-NINE

Good Manners Reveal Gentleness of Body and Clarity of Soul

I noticed that when the hunting dogs pass by the urban dogs, the latter bark and run after the former, as if they see them more honoured and respected, and so they envy that. I also notice that the hunting dogs do not care for them, nor pay them any attention or give their barking any regard—as if these hunting dogs are not of the same species as them.

This is because the urban dogs have tough bodies and bare organs that have no honesty, while the hunting dogs have a gentle build and manners that befit those traits. Additionally, they restrict their hunting to their owner out of fear (*kawf*) of his punishment, or gratitude (*shukr*) for his favours.Therefore, I found that good manners and sociability are related to the gentleness of body and the clarity of soul (*ṣafā' al-rūḥ*).

Similarly, the wise believer does not care for those who envy him nor give him any regard, because each of them is in a different valley; one envies the other on worldly matters, while the other is only concerned with the Hereafter; how far apart are these two valleys?!

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY

Not Comprehending Wisdom Should be Attributed to Lack of Knowledge

Pay attention to this chapter as it is very important.

Whoever believes in Allāh must accept His decisions and know that He is the Wise, the Sovereign and One who does not do things without significance.

If the wisdom behind something escapes man, he attributes ignorance (*jahl*) to himself and accepts the decisions of Allāh the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) and Sovereign (*al-Mālik*). If the intellect asks him about the wisdom (*ḥikma*) behind something, he says, 'It is not clear to me, but I must surrender matters to the Owner.'

Some people used their intellects only to judge the actions of Allāh Almighty, and sought that if they were to come from a creation, it would indicate the opposite of wisdom—so they attributed this to Allāh, which is pure blasphemy (*kufr al-mahad*) and stone-cold madness (*junūn al-bārid*).

The correct way is to attribute ignorance to oneself for minds fall short of realising His wisdom.

The first one to employ such logic was Satan, as he saw his Creator preferring mud to fire, and the mind sees that fire is better, so he criticised His wisdom.

This curse has spread among some so-called scholars and many commoners. How often have we seen a scholar objecting and a commoner rejecting and disbelieving! This curse has prevailed among most people.

They see a scholar in adversity and a lecherous in prosperity, so they assume, 'This does not befit wisdom.'

Scholars know that Allāh Almighty obligated *Zakāt* (Almsgiving), *Jizyah*, spoils of war and expiations in order to give independence to the poor. The aggressors are therefore the ones at fault, as well as those obligated to pay alms, yet deceive and paid it partially so that the poor starve.

We must deny those aggressors and not object to the One who decreed sufficiency for the poor.

This also entails within it, a punishment for aggressors for withholding the rights of the poor, and a trial for the poor in patience about their rights.

The majority of these objectors are not safe at the time of death, from an objection that inclines towards disbelief that risks the soul exiting in blasphemy.

How often does a commoner say, "Such-and-such is in adversity, and he does not deserve that!"

This means that he was subjected to what is claimed, not to be right. A lecher once said:

O Lord! You create moons at night
horseradish branches and sand dunes
Then make passion forbidden to Your servants
O Just Ruler, is that justice?

Some scholars recite similar poems and enjoy them, which is pure blasphemy. They did not understand the wisdom of prohibition or its meaning, because Allāh did not forbid love but forbade acting on it in ways that were censured, such as the look, the touch and the indecent deed.

Refraining from what one desires is a proof of belief in the One who forbids, like the thirsty person refraining from drinking water during Ramaḍān; it is a proof of belief in Him who commanded fasting. Surrendering the soul to striving in cause of Allah is a proof of certainty of recompense. What is desired is merely a sample of what awaits (in the Hereafter), had he pondered and exercised patience for a while, he would win greatly.

If I begin to relate stories, I know scholars and the masses will object. One of the best examples is what has been narrated about Ibn Al-Rawandī. He became very hungry one day, so he sat on the bridge being tormented by his hunger. Some horses adorned with silk and garments passed by, so he asked, 'Whose are these?' He was told, 'They belong to 'Alī ibn Baltaq, the son of the Caliph.'

Then after this, some beautiful slave girls passed by and he again asked, 'Whose are these?' They replied, 'They belong to 'Alī ibn Baltaq.'

Then a man passed by him and saw the signs of hunger on him, so he threw a couple of loaves of bread at him, and he took them and threw them away saying, 'All that for 'Alī ibn Baltaq, and these are for me?'

The ignorant fool forgot that his words and objection deserved this hunger. To him all people are full of defect and yet dare object to Him, in whose actions there is no imperfection—you are a creation made from water and mud, and from a disdained liquid, then you continuously carry filth within you—and if breathing air was kept away from you, you would become corpses.

How often does your wisdom raise an opinion then realizing its faults when presenting it to others! In addition to your excessive sinning, can you do nothing except object to the Wise Owner?

If the purpose of all these adversities were merely for us to submit, it would be enough. Had He created the creation to indicate His existence, then destroyed them without promising them (any recompense), He would have had the right to do so, because He is the Owner. Yet out of His Grace, promised resurrection and recompense and eternal happiness.

Therefore, whenever something happens for which you do not know or understand the wisdom, attribute it to your lack of knowledge. You may see someone who was apparently killed without fairness, when he was responsible for the killing and oppression of others. It is very rare for someone to be in adversity unless he was deserving of it, but these recompensed sins are hidden from us and we only see the resultant penalty.

Surrender you therefore, and you will be safe. Beware of uttering a word of objection or concealment of discontent, for it may throw you outside of the pale of Islām.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-ONE

Similarities of the Day of *'Īd* and the Day of Judgement

I saw people on the day of *'Īd,* and made an analogy between that and the Day of Judgement. When people woke up, they went to congregate (for prayers) just as the dead awake up from their graves to their point of assembly. Some of them are highly adorned and on luxurious mounts, some of them are average, while some are inferior. People will also be similar to that on the Day of Judgement.

Allāh Almighty said,

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ وَفْدًا ﴿٨٥﴾

> "On the Day We will gather the righteous to the Most Merciful as a delegation."
>
> [*Maryam* (19):85],

meaning riding.

وَنَسُوقُ ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا ﴿٨٦﴾

> "And will drive the criminals to Hell in thirst."
>
> [*Maryam* (19):86]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "They are gathered riding, walking and dragged on their faces."[37]

There are those who are stomped in the crowd, so are the oppressors on the Day of Judgement.

On the day of *'Īd*, some people are wealthy almsgivers; people of good in this life are people of good on the Day of Judgement.

Some of them are poor, begging for charity. Similarly, on the Day of Judgement, "My intercession will be for those of my people who have committed major sins."[38]

There are those who do not receive any kindness,

فَمَا لَنَا مِن شَٰفِعِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

> "So now we have no intercessors. And not a devoted friend."
>
> [*al-Shu'ara'* (26):100-101]

Flags are hanging on *'Īd,* so are the flags of the virtuous on the Day of Judgment, while the horn is blown.

Moreover, the state of the servant is reported and it is said, "O people! Such-and-such has attained unparalleled happiness, and so-and-so has attained unequalled misery."

Then they return from *'Īd* with gifts to their homes, and are told this is because of their adhering to commands,

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[37] Tirmidhī, #2424, Aḥmad, #19509 on the authority of Mu'āwiyyah Ibn Ḥaydah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd.*

[38] Abū Dāwūd, #4739 on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd.*

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ فِى غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ ﴿١١﴾

"Those are the ones brought near [to Allāh]."
[*al-Dhāriyāt* (56):11],

and the judgment is issued to them,

إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَآءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُم مَّشْكُورًا ﴿٢٢﴾

"...and your effort has been appreciated."
[*al-Insān* (76):22].

Those below them differ in their status; some of them return to a flourishing home,

بِمَآ أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِى ٱلْأَيَّامِ ٱلْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾

"for what you put forth in the days past."
[*al-Ḥaqqah* (69):24]

Some are average, and some return to a deserted home.

فَٱعْتَبِرُوا۟ يَٰٓأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَبْصَٰرِ ﴿٢﴾

"So take warning, O people of vision."
[*al-Ḥashr* (59):2]

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-TWO

Advice to Scholars and Ascetics

This chapter includes advice (*naṣiḥa*) to the scholar (*'ulamā'*) and the ascetic (*zuhhād*). You are well aware that actions are to be judged only by intentions (*niyyah*), and you understand His saying,

أَلَا لِلَّهِ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْخَالِصُ

"Unquestionably, for Allāh is the pure religion."
[*al-Zumar* (39):3]

You also heard that the early Muslims did not perform or say anything unless preceded by a right intention.

Should your life, O jurists (*fuqahā'*), be wasted in arguing (*jadl*) and yelling (*siyāh*)? Should your voices be raised at the gatherings of the laypeople, seeking competition?

Did you not hear the ḥadīth, "Anyone who seeks knowledge in order to show off before the scholars or to argue with the foolish, or to attract people's attention, will not smell the scent of Paradise?"[39]

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[39] Tirmidhī, #2655, and Ibn Mājah, #253 on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah.*

Some of you embark on issuing *fatwā* (legal verdicts) when you are not fit for it, while the early Muslims (*Salaf*) used to run away from such responsibility.

As for you ascetics (*zuhhād*), He knows the secret as well as what is even more hidden. Do you display poverty in your clothing, while fulfilling your soul's desires? Do you display humbleness and weeping among people, but not in solitude?

Ibn Sīrīn used to laugh and roar among people, and cry most of the night when in his solitude.

Sufyān told his friend, 'How shameless are you to pray where people can see you!'

> I am seeking women of the desert who neither
> chew words nor dye eyebrows

Pity the one who shows off, for on the Day when,

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٠﴾

> "All that is [hidden] within the breasts shall be made known."
>
> [*al-'Ādiyāt* (100):10]

and that is the intentions (*niyyāt*).

Wake up from your slumber, repent from your error and straighten up on the way that is right,

أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَىٰ
عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَّطتُ فِي جَنبِ اللَّهِ وَإِن كُنتُ لَمِنَ السَّاخِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

> "Lest a soul should say, 'Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to Allāh.'"
>
> [*al-Zumar* (39):56]

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-THREE

Suspicions in Asceticism and their Clarification

I found most people shun the Shariʿah and follow their habits and traditions. Two groups could be excluded from this, and they are the scholars (*ʿulamā*ʾ) and worshippers (*ʿubbād*).

I examined majority of scholars and found them in disarray. Some of them confine themselves to the worldly sciences and turn away from spiritual sciences connected to the Hereafter, either due to either their ignorance or its difficulty—for they do not pursue necessary knowledge if it was difficult. They follow habits consider themselves to be excused because of their knowledge, while forgetting that such knowledge is an argument against them.

There are those who stand with the image of knowledge unaware of its true purpose. There are others who associate with ruling governments, hurting themselves by the sins and oppression they witness insomuch being unable to disapprove or coerced to praise them. They also beguile ruling authorities, who claim, 'If I were not correct, such a knowledgeable person would not associate with me.' And also beguile the laypeople who claims, 'If this rulers were not good, then such (people of) knowledge would not mingle with him.'

I found *Al-Ashrāf*[40] confident of intercession of his forefathers, forgetting that the Jews are descendants of Isrā'īl (Ya'qūb).

As for the worshippers, I found most of them in disarray; and those with proper intentions are far from the right path in most of their deeds. A group of the early ascetics wrote books filled with ugly concealments, unauthentic narrations and recommendations that are against the Shari'ah.

For example, the books of Al-Ḥārith Al-Muhasibī and Abū 'Abdullah Al-Tirmidhī, *'Qut Al-Qulub'* by Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī, and *'Al-Ihyā'* by Abū Hamid Al-Ṭusī Al-Ghazalī.

When the novice opens his eyes and intends to walk the path contained in these books, they carry him towards wrongdoing, as they are based on false reports. They disparage the worldly life, unaware of what is to be disparaged therein; so the novice thinks that it is disparaged in and of itself, escaping to the mountains. He may miss the congregational prayer and the Friday Prayer; he may restrict himself to eating nuts and pears that result in colitis. Some of them only drink milk, so their build becomes slender, or eat beans and lentils that rumble their stomachs.

The person going to pilgrimage must be gentle with the camel in order to reach his destination. Do you not see the clever Turkic people looking after their horses before finding their own food?

Storytellers may relate stories of some of the early Muslims and ascetics, causing disciples to follow them and hurt themselves.

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[40] *Al-Ashraf*: Literally means *'The Honorable'* and it refers to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

If we denounce such actions and clarify the fault of its doer, the ignorant replies, "Do you object to ascetics?" The right way should be followed no matter how glorified the person is considered among people. For example, we say, "Abū Ḥanīfah said such-and-such", then Al-Shāfiʿī disagreed with him; the evidence is what should be followed.

Al-Marrudhī said, 'Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was in favour of (encouraging) marriage', and I said, 'Ibrāhīm ibn Adham said otherwise.' Then he said, 'We have fallen into a by-way. You should follow the way of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhum*).'

Imām Aḥmad criticized Al-Ḥārith Al-Muhasibī and refuted Sarrī Al-Saqtī when he claimed that, 'When Allāh created the alphabet, the letter *Alif* stood up while the letter *Bā'* prostrated.' So Aḥmad said, 'Turn the masses away from that, Allāh does not take sides; he is Truthful and Mighty.'

I see that most people turned away from the *Sharīʿah*, and regard the words of ascetics as their *Sharīʿah*.

Some people related that Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī said, 'Some of the early Muslims used to measure his daily intake of food with a frond, and it decreased every day!' This is at variance with the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions, who used to eat just below fullness. As for forcing hunger upon oneself (outside of fasting), it is forbidden.

Others say that Dāwūd Al-Ta'i said to Sufyān, 'If you drink cold water, when will you love death?' and he had water in a jug. Did he not know that the soul has its rights, that drinking hot water slouches and harms the stomach, and that the Messenger (ﷺ) used cool water?

Another of them said, 'For fifty years, I have desired grilled meat, but could not purify the money for its price,' while another said, 'I desire to eat a carrot dipped in molasses, but unable to find halal money.' Did they want money that had not been involved in any suspicious activity?

This is what the Messenger (ﷺ) considered; even though abstinence (*wara'*) is good (*ḥasan*), overburdening (*mushāq al-shadīda*) oneself is not right.

Bishr Al-Ḥafī said, 'I do not teach ḥadīth, because I desire to do so,' which is an invalid justification, because man is commanded to marry, which is a great desire.

Bishr used to walk barefoot until he was called *'Al-Ḥafī'* (meaning *'the Barefooted'* in Arabic). Had he covered his feet with a pair of shoes, it would have been better for him. Walking barefoot harms the eye, and has nothing to do with abstinence, because the Messenger (ﷺ) used to wear shoes.

The way of the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*) is at variance with today's ascetics (*mutaẓahidūn*). The Messenger (ﷺ) used to laugh, joke, choose desirable women, race with 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*),[41] eat meat, love sweet fruit[42] and seek pleasant water.[43] Such was the way of his Companions (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*), but the ascetics invented new ways, as if following a new *Sharī'ah*—all of this is far from the right path.

They cite the words of Al-Muhasibī and Al-Makkī, but never cite the words of a Companion, a Follower or an Imām. If they see a scholar wearing beautiful clothes, marrying a desirable woman, skip ping fasting for a day, or laughing, they criticise him.

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[41] Reference already mentioned.

[42] Reference already mentioned

[43] Reference already mentioned

Therefore, one should know that most of them whose intentions are proper are not (necessarily) on the right path, because of their lack of knowledge. Some of them would say, 'For eighty years, I have never lied down (for sleep).' While others have said, 'I vowed not to drink water for a year.' These are fallacies as the soul has its due rights.

As for whoever has improper intentions, such as those who dissimulate and give the impression of hypocrisy (*nifāq*) to attain worldly benefits or to have people kiss their hands [as a sign of respect], one should not argue with them—and the majority of *Ṣūfiyah* are like that. They take off colorful clothes so that people see them forsaking embellishment, while they have better than the Ṣaqlatūn.[44] The early Muslims (*Salaf*) only did that due to poverty (*faqr*).

They involve themselves in pleasures, collecting funds and ignoring suspicion of sources of wealth, frequenting comforts and playing and consorting with ruling authorities. They have revealed their true face and contradicted the abstinence of their preceding forerunners.

I am astonished at whoever extends his money to them.

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[44] A type of luxurious clothing

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FOUR

Evidence for Resurrection

Allāh Almighty provided examples for the states of human life for him to consider. One such example is the lunar phases where the moon starts small and grows to a full moon, before declining in obliteration and perhaps coming up against an unexpected corruptive force, such as the eclipse.

Man similarly, begins as a drop of sperm, and then rises from weakness to integrity; becoming as a full moon. After that his state starts to decline to weakness. Death may strike earlier like the eclipse to the moon. The poet said:

Man is like a crescent, at its beginning
It starts small and gentle, then grows even
It increases, until it becomes full
then declines, night after night, until obliteration

Another example is that of the silkworm. It is white at first until it starts feeding on mulberry leaves. When it becomes green, life streams into it before it moves from one state to another, like a child.

Then it sleeps, similar to man's unawareness of the consequences, then it awakens and is keen on eating again, like the gluttonous one is keen on attaining worldly desires.

Then it surrounds itself as man does with his sins, and it is imprisoned therein like the dead in his grave (*qabr*). Then it eats its way out, and comes out another creation, as the dead are resurrected uncircumcised and free from illnesses.

A proof of resurrection is that the sperm-drop is an inanimate matter, then it becomes a living human just as the grains thrown into the ground, then it shakes with greenness (of life).

If the person has consideration
He finds a lesson in everything

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FIVE

Preferring Pleasures Squanders Much Good

Using the intellect enables man to consider consequences, and the weak of mind sees only the present situation and ignores future consequences.

The thief wants to take wealth and forget (the risk of) getting his hands cut. The idle wants the pleasure of comfort and forgets what it yields of missing knowledge and earnings. As he ages and is asked about some simple matters, he does not know; and if he needs something, he asks of other and humiliates himself. Therefore, his misfortune exceeds the pleasure of idleness he attained in addition to squandering the rewards of the Hereafter by ignoring the righteous deeds in this life.

The consumer of intoxicants finds pleasure at that moment and forgets the calamities he faces in this life and the Hereafter. As for fornication, the person wants to fulfill his desire, while forgetting what he reaps of the worldly scandal and risk of legal punishment. If the adulterous woman was married, she may attribute the pregnancy to her husband to hide it.

Everything else goes the same way, so pay attention to consequences.

Do not give precedence to a pleasure that squanders much good.

You must endure difficulty to attain great rewards.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SIX

Religiosity Does Not Compliment Attaining of Pleasures

There is nothing reflecting real life in this world, except for a scholar or an ascetic. Granted that their peace of mind may (intermittently) be disturbed, for a scholar is occupied with knowledge and needs to earn a livelihood too. He may have a family, or become associated with ruling authorities and risk becoming corrupted. Similar is the case with the ascetic.

The scholar and the worshipper must have a source of earning. He must be satisfied with any income he receives, however little—this will ensure no one enslaves him or holds him hostage.

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal had a wage that was less than one *dinar* to sustain himself.

If the scholar is not content, then his mingling with rulers and common laypeople risks corrupting him.

There are those who want to increase their eating choices, and others who cannot tolerate rough living, but it is impossible for religiosity to go along with attaining of desires.

If the scholar and the ascetic remain content with sufficient provision, neither of them will degrade themselves in from of others, nor need to frequent the doors of rulers and donors.

The pleasant life is for the solitary who is not dependent on charity or favours.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-SEVEN

Differences of Scholars in Primary (*usūl*) and Secondary Matters (*farū'*)

People differ greatly in their understanding; even scholars differ greatly in primary (*usūl*)* and secondary (*farū'*) topics.

It is narrated that Abū Dāwūd interpreted the Messenger's (ﷺ) saying, "Beware urinating in stagnant water and then using it for ablution,"[45] to mean: 'If someone else urinated in it, then it is permitted.'

He did not understand the meaning of defilement, but only considered the literal meaning.

Similarly is the saying, "The meat of the swine is forbidden, but its skin is not."

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* [Publishers note:] For more information on the Othrdox Sunni Creed, please refer to the 'The Creed of al-Wāsitiyyah' *by Shaykhul Islām Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK, 1st ed., 2009.*
And 'The Creed of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī' *by Imām 'Abdullāh Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, With the commentary of Shaikh Ahmad ibn Yahyā al-Najmī, Published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK, 1st ed., 2012.*

[45] Bukhāri, #239 and Muslim, #282

We seek refuge in Allāh from such poor understanding.

Poets, who are occupied by observing small details, also differ.

Therefore, the least common thing in people is having understanding and knowledge of detailed meanings.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-EIGHT

Pleasures Are Mixed with Disturbances

Whoever carefully examines life will come know to realise it holds no pleasure; and if a pleasure was found, it is mixed with disturbances that exceed the pleasure manifold.

Such pleasures include women, one of whom may live with the husband, but in reality not love the husband. This realization makes him abstain from her and lead to her betrayal of him, causing ruin.

If one being desired was attained, the thought of separation causes pain exceeding the amount of pleasure.

Pleasures include children, yet he suffers if he is granted a daughter—until she is married—and what she may face from her husband or fearing scandalous ordeals.

As for the son, if he experienced sickness, the heart is torn apart; and if he deviated from righteousness, grief increases. If he became an enemy, he desires the father's perishing. Even if the desired was attained, the thought of separation causes pain to the heart.

If a lecherous [one who is showing excessive sexual desire] was to want a rebellious woman, his honour and religiosity would be compounded in this life. This would lead to a change in his own desirability as he will be tainted by previous dishonour and sin.

How often did a man's desire overcome him that led to intercourse with a slave woman, who delivered a baby leading to the child's disgrace?[46]

Pleasures also include enjoying wealth, for sins are committed in pursuit of it. Losing it yields sorrow and wasting one's life to accumulate it is folly.

These are examples of what has not been stated, so whoever is helped by Allāh Almighty must take necessary precaution leading to the soundness of faith, body and health. Leave the whims (*shahwa*) whose distress surpasses its pleasure.

The pleasure of idleness results in lack of knowledge and scarcity of deeds, again the sorrow surpassing the pleasure multiple times.

Beware of being overcome by short-term whims. Whenever your whim intends to return, block it and weigh its short-term pleasure against the long-term consequences.

وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّآ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ﴿٢٦٩﴾

"And none will remember except those of understanding."
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 269]

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[46] Meaning the child's disgrace, because it is known from his colour that his mother was a slave.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-NINE

Follow the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to be Guided

I saw that *Shaytān* has deceived people in various ways, turning most of them away from knowledge—which is the guiding lamp of those walking the path—leaving them stumbling in the darkness of ignorance (*ẓulmāt al-jahl*) and occupying them with empirical and sensory affairs that ignore consulting intellect.

If one of them faces an adversity or a disaster, he objects (to Allāh's decree) and disbelieves. There are those who attribute calamities to time (*dahr*), and others who insult the worldly life. This is foolishness as neither time nor life does anything of its own accord—the slander is directed to the One who decides fate.

Some of them are driven to deny any wisdom, and say, 'What is the benefit of demolishing what is built?' Some of them claimed not to imagine the return of the demolished; they deny resurrection and say, 'No one returned from there.'

They fail to understand that existence is in continuum and not over yet. If we were resurrected in this very life, then belief in the unseen would be meaningless, so it is not correct to deduce life from life.

Shaytān observed and found some Muslims with good sense of acumen. He then convinced them that the mere understanding of the apparent meanings of *Sharīʿah* is known and shared even by the common people. This led to Muslims desiring *ʿIlm Al-Kalām*[47] to advance their theories, so they began to use and cite the words of Hippocrates, Galen and Pythagoras as evidence in sacred law. Even while these philosophers do not follow our *Sharīʿah* or our Prophet (ﷺ)! They only utter what their selves have enticed them with.

When the early Muslims had children, they would occupy them with memorizing the noble Qur'ān and listening to ḥadīth affirming firm belief in their hearts. People have slackened in that regard, so the intelligent child became occupied with the sciences of philosophy of such men, ignored the Messenger's (ﷺ) narrations and traditions labeling them as casual reports. Among the names for ḥadīth scholars, they call *'Hashawis'*.[48]

They came to believe that the exact science is the science of the Mutation, the Hyle and the Monad. They proceed to talk about the Divine Attributes, and they refute the authentic ḥadīths from the Messenger (ﷺ) with their actualities.

Al-Muʿtazilah said, 'Allāh cannot be seen because the visible must be in a certain direction and location,' by which they contradict the Messenger's (ﷺ) saying, "You shall see your Lord [in the Hereafter] as you see the moon, and you shall have no inconvenience in seeing Him."[49] This ḥadīth proves the ability of seeing him in a way we're unable to comprehend.

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[47] *ʿIlm Al-Kalām*: Literally means *'the Science of Discourse'*, and refers to 'rational scholastic theology'

[48] A term that means *'worthless commoners'*

These fools were prevented from occupying themselves with the Qur'ān, and came to say, 'It is created,' so its sanctity was removed from the hearts. They reject the obligation of following the Sunnah, while plagarising their beliefs from Hippocrates and Galen.

Whoever followed the philosophers benefitted relieving themselves of prayer and fasting. The major scholars used to disapprove of *'ilm Al-Kalām.*

Al-Shāfi'ī said, 'My judgment of them is to make them ride mules, defame them and publicise. This is the punishment of whoever leaves the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and occupies himself with *'Ilm Al-Kalām.*'

They even believed that whoever does not know how to rationally deduce the evidence for the oneness of Allāh is not a Muslim.

So beware mingling with the innovators [in religion], follow the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to be guided and to gain salvation.

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[49] Bukhārī, #6574 and Muslim, #182 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY

Time is like a Sword

I noticed that habits overpower people to waste time, and the early Muslims used to warn against this.

Al-Fuḍayl said, 'I know someone who counts his words from one Friday to the next.'

Some people entered upon one of the early Muslims. They said, 'Perhaps we have distracted you.' He said, 'To be honest, I was reciting and I stopped because of you.'

A worshipper went to Sarī Al-Saqatī and saw a group of people sitting with him, he said, 'You have become a host for the idle,' then he left without sitting down. That is because the guest is tempted by the host's hospitality, and prolongs his visit making him unsafe from any harm.

A group of people was sitting with Ma'rūf[50] and kept sitting for a while, so he said, 'The Lord of the sun does not falter in pushing it;

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[50] Tirmidhī, #3464 on the authority of Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī.*

do you not want to get up?'

One of those who recounted the moments was 'Āmir ibn 'Abd Qays. A man told him, 'Stop so that I can talk to you.' He said, 'Then hold the sun.'

Karz Ibn Wabrah was told, 'What if you went out to the desert?' He said, 'The craft (he was involved with) would become corrupted.'

Dāwūd Al-Ta'ī used to swallow crushed (wet) bread[51] and say, "The time difference between swallowing crushed bread and chewing normal bread can be used to recite fifty verses.'

Uthman Al-Baqillanī was constant in mentioning Allāh, and said, 'During breakfast, I feel like my soul is departing due to being occupied by eating that prevents me from mentioning Allāh.' One of the early Muslims advised his companions, 'When you leave here, be separated so that one of you may recite the Qur'ān on his way, because when you are together you will talk.'

Be aware that time is too precious to waste a moment thereof. It is authentically narrated that the Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Whoever said 'Glory is for Allāh, the Magnificent, and with His Praise, a palm tree is thereby planted for him in Paradise.'"

How many hours are wasted by man, squandering huge rewards! This life is life a farm and it is as if man is told, 'For every seed you plant, we will give you a thousand *Karr*[52] ' How can the wise stop planting or slacken therein?

One of the things that help make use of time is solitude and isola tion as much as possible and restricting interaction with people to greetings and necessary needs.

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[51] It can either be translated to crushed or wet bread.

[52] *Karr* is a weight measure that equals 2925 kg

Another thing that helps in this regard is reduction of food, as its abundance causes long sleeping and squandering the night.

Whoever examined the lives of early Muslims and believed in recompense will find what I said valuable.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-ONE

Married Life is based on Love

The wise should choose a woman of good conduct and from a good household. She should be somewhat poor to enable him to bring her as much as to satisfy her needs. Her age should be in close proximity to his.

As for the older man, he will harm her if she is young of age. She may commit adultery or conspire against his life. He may be forced to divorce her, which will hurt him if his love is strong for her.

One should complement his own shortcomings with good manners and decent spending. The woman should not be close to her husband too much, or he will get bored and should not be far apart long enough for him to forget her.

When near to him, she should be fully groomed and adorned. She should avoid that he sees her private parts or her whole body, because the human body is not desirable (to most). Similarly, he should not show her his body for intercourse is in the bed.

Khosrow once saw how the animal is skinned and cooked, so his stomach turned, and he abstained from meat because of that. He told his minister about this, and he said, 'Your majesty, the food is at the table, and the woman is in bed.' Meaning, 'Do not search beyond that.'

'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anha*) said, 'I never saw the Messenger's (ﷺ) private parts, nor did he see mine. He got up naked one night, and I had never seen his body before.'

This is from the wise things to do as it disables man from finding fault with woman. Each of them should maintain separate beds and come together in a state of perfection. Some people take these things lightly and consequently, find their women to be dull, and he becomes dull himself. Each of them discovers from the other what is not desired, so the heart is repelled and marital life becomes devoid of love (*maḥabbah*).

This virtue must be considered and applied as it is a great one.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-TWO

Whoever Humiliates himself Loses this Life and the Hereafter

There is no real life except in being content with that little one has. Whenever one becomes concerned with additional, worries increase and the attention scatters leaving man enslaved. As for the contented one, he does not need to mingle with those above his (material) rank, and does not care for those like him, for he has what he has.

Some people, particularly scholars seek a life of pleasure and never satisfy; they erode their faith and humiliate themselves. Becoming enslaved when frequenting ruling governments, even after witnessing atrocities taking place they are unable to reject them, having likely to have praised the oppressor to avoid his wrath.

What they gained of degradation and lack of faith is manifold from whatever pleasures they attained. The worst states include those who undertake judgments and giving testimony in order to pursue coveted positions.

‘Abdu’l-Ḥamid, the Judge, was never biased. He once sent for Al-

Mu'tadidh[53] and told him, 'You have leased some endowments so pay their lease,' which he did.

Al-Mutadidh told him, 'Such-and-such has died when he owed us money.' He told him, 'Do you remember when you appointed me; you told me, 'I have taken this responsibility off my neck and put it on yours'. Therefore, I do not accept what you are saying unless you bring me two witnesses.'

The witnesses arrived. A group entered upon a Caliph, so the servant said, 'Testify before our master regarding so-and-so,' and they did, then Al-Majzu'ī marched forward and said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! Shall I testify before you with regards to what is written in this parchment?' He said, 'Testify.' He said, 'This does not suffice. I will not testify until you say 'Yes'.' He said, 'Yes.'

In our time, these rules have changed everyone, especially those who are offered money to testify, so you find them dragged to testify on what they did not see.

Abū'l-Ma'alī ibn Shāfi' told me, 'I was carried to a Bedouin, who was imprisoned, and testify against him. I ask Allāh's forgiveness for that.'

Witnesses do not receive rations for doing that; what happens is a knock on the door and the identifier saying, 'May Allāh guard your blessings; (you are sought to give) a testimony!'

When Ibrāhīm Al-Nakha'ī was told, 'You will be a judge,' he wore a red shirt and sat in the market. They told him, 'He is not fit for such position.'[54]

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[53] An Abbasid Caliph

[54] It was seen as a sign of insanity to do something like that.

An old man entered upon Hārun Al-Rashīd, who brought him to appoint him as a judge. He greeted him and said, 'How are you and how are the kids?' They said, 'He is mad.'

By Allāh, that madness is sanity.

I do not think belief in the Hereafter is but shaken within most hearts.

We ask Allāh Almighty for the soundness of faith, for He is Capable.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-THREE

Fooling Allāh is Impossible

The essence of this chapter has been repeatedly stated in this book, but repeating it is important so it does not get overlooked.

The believer must know that Allāh Almighty is Sovereign (*al-Mālik*) and Wise (*al-Ḥakim*) and does not decree something without purpose. This knowledge (*ʿilm*) alone suffices us not to object fate (*qadr*).

Many have criticised and denounced the wisdom [behind fate], which is blasphemy (*kufr*).

The first to do this was *Shayṭān* when he said,

خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُۥ مِن طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

> "You created me from fire and created him from mud."
> [*al-Aʿrāf* (7):12]

He meant, "Preferring mud over fire is not wise (*ḥikma*)."

I knew jurists who frequently object. The problem is that the objector looks at the action itself; were the action to come from creatures like us, it would have been alright to object. However, if the intellect falls short of understanding His wisdom, it is insane for the faulty to object.

The objection of the lewd is constant, because he wants everything to conform to his desires—when they do not, he objects. Some even exceeded discussing death by saying, "(How can) He build and then demolish?"

We knew of a learned man who had memorised the Qur'ān with the different modes of recitation and learned many ḥadiths, who then fell into sin and lived (in that state) over seventy years. When death came to him, he purportedly said, "Did death find no soul other than mine (to take)?"

I have heard similarly that a man remarked upon his death, "My Lord is unjust to me, and this is too much."

It is undesirable to repeat the words of the lewd in their madness and cold objections. If they understood life as a competition arena and a hospital of patience to demonstrate the impact of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), they would not object. What they seek of safety and fulfilling desires lies ahead of them in the Hereafter, if they but understood.

It is like a building worker who is dirtied with mud, and after he is finished, he washes up and puts on clean clothes.

Similarly, when this mortal body is demolished, the honourable soul is separated from it and another body is raised fit for eternal life.

After all that, we tell the objector,

فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى
ٱلسَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُۥ مَا يَغِيظُ ﴿١٥﴾

> "Let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and let him strangle himself."
>
> [*al-Hajj* (22):15]

His objection does not prevent fate (*qadr*) from coming to pass, nor his acceptance of it. He will be rewarded for the latter, which is better than punishment in rejection.

How good was the silence of Waddāh Al-Yaman when he hid inside a strengthened wooden box. The Sultan said, 'O box! If you contain what we think, we will obliterate you. If you do not, there is no harm in burying some wood.'

If he gave out a sound, it would not help him as he would have been pulled out and killed in a horrible manner.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FOUR

Focusing Attention in Allāh's Service

Whoever looks carefully at the worldly life will know that Allāh Almighty wants us to avoid it beyond need. Whoever inclined towards its permitted pleasures will find sadness with every happiness, and tiredness beside every comfort—and a greater disturbance at the end of every pleasure. Nothing is raised of this life except it's lowered again.

The Messenger (ﷺ) loved 'A'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anha*), so the incident of the slander (*ifk*) took place.

He inclined towards Zaynab (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anha*), and the verse,

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا

"When Zayd has accomplished his desire from her."
[*al-Aḥzāb* (33):37]

was revealed.

It is enough that when his desired is attained, the mind imagines leaving it. As the poet said:

The utmost distress, in my view, is in joy
whose feeler is certain of its departure

Therefore, the wise must know that Allāh's purpose from this disturbance is to repel him from the worldly life. One must take his needs there from and leave distractions behind, so that his attention is focused in serving Allāh.

Whoever deviates from that will regret it.

CHAPTER THREE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-FIVE

Various Advices

The wise among mankind manages his living with his intellectual capacity. If he is poor, he strives in a craft or a profession that protects him from degradation, reduces rations and exercises contentment thereby living safely from people's favours and being honoured from them.

If he is wealthy, he must manage his spending to avoid poverty (*faqr*) and needing to put himself at the mercy of others. It is foolish to be extravagant and boastful with spending to rile his enviers, because this (ironically) exposes him to envy. One should be moderate and conceal what he is able to.

A cleaner found some money, so he started spending beyond his usual capacity. This was noticed and the money was taken away from him making him poor again.

Manage to preserve the money and be moderate in spending, while hiding what should not be displayed. It is considered a mistake for the husband to show his wife how much money he really has, because if it was little, she thinks little of him; and if it was much, she will demand more from him.

Allāh the Almighty said,

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ

"And give not unto the foolish your property."
[*al-Nisā'* (4):5],

the same applies to the child. The same principle applies to secrets. They must be kept and guarded, just as friendship is because a friend may turn. The poet said:

Beware your enemy one fold
and your friend a thousand folds
Because the friend may turn against you
and he knows what harms you better

By Allāh's praise, we conclude the recording of the gathered thoughts, restricting them to purge spiritual illnesses and adorn Islāmic manners and acceptable virtues.

May Allāh make it from the best of guidance on the platform of exhortation and preaching, and a beneficial book for the guidance of people.

Praise is due to Allāh, First and Last.
May Allāh bestow His blessings and peace on our Master, Muḥammad (ﷺ), his Family and Companions.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

ʻĀʼISHAH: bint Abū Bakr *as-Ṣiddīq*, the Mother of the Believers and most beloved wife of the Prophet (ﷺ). She reported many *aḥādīth* from the Prophet and many Companions and Successors reported from her. She died in the year 58H.

ʻĀMIR BIN FUHAIRAH: al-Taimī, the servant of Abū Bakr. He migrated along with the Prophet (ﷺ) and Abū Bakr and witnessed *Badr* and *Uḥud*. He was martyred in the year 4H.

ʻĀMIR BIN ʻABD QAIS: ʻĀmir Ibn ʻAbdullāh al-Quḍayrī, famously know as ʻĀmir Ibn ʻAbd Qais al-Baṣrī. He was known for his knowledge and piety and died in the year 55H.

ʻABBĀD IBN BISHR: Ibn Waqsh al-Anṣārī Abū Bishr. He witnessed *Badr* and the following battles and was one of those who killed Kaʻb al-Ashraf. He was martyred on the Day of *al-Yamāmah* in the year 12H.

ʻABDULLĀH IBN ʻABBĀS: Ibn ʻAbdul-Muṭṭalib Ibn Hāshim Ibn

ʿAbd Munāf al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī, the cousin of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the interpreter of the Qur'ān. He was born three years before the *Hijrah* and was called the *'Ocean of knowledge'* due to his vast knowledge. He took part in the *Jihād* in North Africa in the year 27H and died in the year 68H.

ʿABDULLĀH IBN ʿAMR: Ibn al-ʿĀs Ibn Wā'il Ibn Hāshim Ibn Suʿayd Ibn Saʿd Ibn Sahm al-Sahmī. He and his father were Companions. He was literate and attained permission from the Prophet (ﷺ) to write everything he said. He died in the year 65H.

ʿABDULLĀH ABŪ JĀBIR: Ibn ʿAmr Ibn Ḥazzām Ibn Thalabah al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Sulamī, amongst those who gave the pledge of *ʿUqbah*. He witnessed *Badr* and was martyred at *Uḥud*.

ʿABDULLĀH IBN MASʿŪD: Ibn Ghāfil Ibn Ḥabīb al-Hadhlī Abū ʿAbdur-Raḥmān. One of the scholars amongst the Companions and he witnessed *Badr* and the following battles. He had many virtues and died in the year 32H.

ʿABDULLĀH IBN RAWAHAH: ʿAbdullāh Ibn Rawahah Ibn Thaʿlabah al-Anṣarī, a poet and warrior from the Khazraj tribe in Madīnah, gave allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ) along with others at the valley of ʿAqabah before the Prophet (ﷺ) migrated to Madīnah. He participated in all the battles beginning with *Badr*. In one of the campaigns, the Prophet (ﷺ) appointed him governor of Madīnah in the Prophet's (ﷺ) absence. He was besieged along with others at *Mawtah* and killed.

ʿABDULLĀH IBN SAYYĀD: His father was a Jew and it was thought by some that he was the Dajjāl. He was born during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and was one-eyed - later it was proven that he was not the Dajjāl. It is said that he accepted Islām after the death of the Messenger (ﷺ) and he died in the year 63H.

'ABDULLĀH IBN 'UMAR: Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-'Adawī, Abū 'Abdul-Raḥmān, the noble Companion and scholar. He reported many *aḥādīth* from the Messenger (ﷺ) and died in the year 73H.

'ABDUL-MALIK IBN MARWĀN: Ibn al-Hakam, Abū al-Walīd, the Leader of the Believers. He was a Legal Jurist and possessed knowledge of the religion. He died in the year 86H.

'ABDUR-RAḤMĀN IBN AUF: Ibn Awf Ibn Abd Awf Ibn al-Ḥārith al-Qurashī al-Zuhrī, Abū Muḥammad, one of the ten promised Paradise. He migrated to Abysinnia on both occasions and witnessed every battle with the Prophet (ﷺ). He was very rich and very generous when giving in the Way of Allāh. He died in the year 32H.

'ABDUL-WĀḤID IBN ZAYD: The shaykh of the *Ṣūfis* at his time, his supplications were answered. He is trustworthy and precise and died in the year 177H.

ABŪ AL-'ABBĀS IBN 'AṬĀ': Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Sahl Ibn 'Aṭā' al-Admī, from the shaykhs of the *Ṣufis*. He died in the year 309H or 311H.

ABŪ 'ABDUL-RAḤMĀN AL-SULAMĪ: Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā Abū 'Abdul-Raḥmān al-Sulamī an-Naysābūrī. Author of a number of unique works on *Ṣūfism* and devoted to ḥadīth. Al-Ḥākim reported from him but he was regarded to be *ḍa'īf* in ḥadīth. He died in the year 412H.

ABŪ 'AMR IBN NUJAID: Ismā'īl bin Nujaid bin Aḥmad as-Sulamī Abū 'Amr, from the shaykhs of the *Ṣūfis* and he met al-Junayd. He was one of the greatest scholars of his time and died in the year 366H.

ABŪ BAKR AL-ṢIDDĪQ: ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Uthmān Ibn Āmir al-Qurashī. The first *Khalīfah* of the Messenger (ﷺ), his companion in the cave, his closest friend and one of the ten promised Paradise. He was the first man to accept Islām and died in the year 13H.

ABŪ’L-DARDĀ’: Uwaymir Ibn Mālik Ibn Zayd Ibn Qays al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī. There is a difference of opinion concerning his name. He accepted Islām on the day of *Badr* and witnessed *Uḥud.* He was from the Legal Jurists and ascetics of the Companions. He died in the year 32H.

ABŪ DĀWŪD: Sulaymān Ibn al-Ash‘ath Ibn Isḥāq Ibn Bashīr, Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, the Imām, Ḥāfiẓ and author of the famous Sunan. He died in the year 275H.

ABŪ DHARR AL-GHIFĀRĪ: Jundub Ibn Junādah Ibn Sakn, he was of those who accepted Islām early on but delayed his migration and hence did not witness *Badr.* His virtues are many and he died in the year 32H.

ABŪ ḤĀMID AL-GHAZĀLĪ: Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī, Abū Ḥāmid, he excelled in many sciences and authored a number of works such as *Ihyā Ulum al-Dīn* and *Tahāfat al-Falāsifah.* He was known for his worship and asceticism and died in the year 505H.

ABŪ ḤANĪFAH: Nu‘mān Ibn Thābit al-Tamīmī al-Kūfī, one of the great Imāms of this nation and the earliest of the Four Imāms. He commenced his studies in philosophy and scholastic theology, but later abandoned them to study fiqh. He died in the year 150H.

ABŪ ḤĀTIM AL-BUSTĪ: see ibn Ḥibbān.

ABŪ HURAYRAH: ‘Abdul-Raḥmān Ibn Ṣakhr al-Dusī. His name is greatly differed over. He accepted Islām in the year 7H and reported the most ḥadīth from the Prophet (ﷺ). He died in the year 59H.

ABŪ JAHL: ‘Amr bin Hāshim Ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī al-Qurashī, one of the greatest enemies of the Prophet (ﷺ). He was killed at Badr in the year 2H.

ABŪ MŪSĀ AL-ASH‘ARĪ: ‘Abdullāh Ibn Qays Ibn Salīm. He had a beautiful recitation and was one of the scholars amongst the Companions. He died in the year 42H or 44H.

ABŪ MUSLIM AL-KHAWLĀNĪ: ‘Abdullāh Ibn Thawb, the Legal Jurist, worshipper and ascetic. He was trustworthy and precise. He accepted Islām before the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) but did not get to see him. He died in the year 62H.

ABŪ NU‘AYM: The great Ḥāfiẓ and Muḥaddith of his age, Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Isḥāq Ibn Mūsā Ibn Mahrān al-Asbahānī *al-Ṣūfis*. He died in the year 430H at the age of ninety-four.

ABŪ SA‘ĪD AL-KHARRĀZ: Ahmad Ibn ‘Īsā, one of the *Ṣūfis* Imāms. He died in the year 286H.

ABŪ SULAYMĀN AL-DĀRĀNĪ: ‘Abdul-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah al-‘Īsā ad-Dārānī, Abū Sulaymān, the famous ascetic. He died in the year 215H.

ABŪ ‘UTHMĀN AL-NAYSĀBŪRĪ: Sa‘īd Ibn Ismā‘īl Ibn Sa‘īd al-Ḥayrī al-Naysābūrī, Abū ‘Uthmān, the famous ascetic known for his excellent manners. It was through him that *Ṣūfism* spread in Naysābūr. He died in the year 298H.

ABŪ SA‘ĪD AL-KHUDRĪ: Sa‘d Ibn Mālik Ibn Sinān Ibn ‘Ubayd al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī. He and his father were both Companions and he witnessed all the battles that followed *Uḥud.* He was one of the scholars amongst the Companions and reported many *aḥādīth* from the Messenger (ﷺ). He died in the year 74H.

ABŪ ‘UBAIDAH IBN AL-JARRĀḤ: ‘Āmir Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn al-Jarrāḥ Ibn Hilāl al-Qurashī al-Fahrī, one of the ten promised Paradise. He accepted Islām early on and witnessed the battle of *Badr* and the following battles. He is the trustworthy one of this nation and died as a martyr due to a plague in the year 18H at the age of fifty-eight.

‘ADĪ IBN ḤĀTIM: Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Sa‘d Ibn al-Ḥashraj Ibn ‘Amr al-Qays al-Ṭā’ī, Abu Ṭarīf. He was a Christian who accepted Islām and witnessed the battles of *al-Jamal*, *Ṣiffīn* and *an-Nahrawān* with ‘Alī. He died in the year 68H.

AL-‘ALĀ’ IBN AL-KHAḌRAMĪ: al-Khazrajī. His supplications would be answered and he died in the year 21H.

AḤMAD: Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal Ibn Hilāl al-Shaybānī, Abū ‘Abdullāh, the Imām of the Sunnah and author of the famous *Musnad.* He was known for his knowledge of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and his *taqwā* and asceticism. He died in the year 241H.

‘ALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB: Ibn ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib Ibn Hāshim al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī, the fourth Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of ten promised Paradise. He accepted Islām at the age of thirteen and was famous for his chivalry, bravery and knowledge. He married Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet (ﷺ) and was martyred in the year 40H.

‘AMR IBN AL-‘ĀS: Ibn Wā’il al-Qurashī al-Sahmī. He accepted Islām during the year of *Ḥudaybiyyah* and was the one who conquered Egypt. He died in the year 43H.

ʿAMR BIN ʿUTBAH BIN FARQAD: al-Qurashī, known for his worship and asceticism.

ANAS IBN MĀLIK: Ibn al-Naḍar Ibn Ḍamḍam al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī, the servant of the Messenger (ﷺ). He witnessed *Badr* but was not of age to actually participate. He died in the year 93H.

AWAIS AL-QARNĪ: Ibn ʿĀmir, the famous ascetic. He lived during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) but did not get to see him. He was trustworthy and precise and died in the year 37H.

AL-AWZĀʿĪ: ʿAbdul-Raḥmān Ibn ʿAmr Ibn Muḥammad, Abū ʿAmr, one of the great scholars of his time. He was well versed in *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and the military expeditions undertaken by the Prophet (ﷺ). The Muslims have agreed as to his excellence and being an Imām. His *fiqh* dominated Spain for a time and he died in the year 158H.

AL-BARĀ'A IBN MĀLIK: Ibn al-Naḍr al-Anṣārī. He witnessed *Uḥud* and gave the pledge of allegiance under the tree. He was martyred in the year 20H on the Day of *Tustor.*

BUKHĀRĪ: Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mughīrah, Abū ʿAbdullāh. He was born in the year 194H and became one of the Imāms of ḥadīth and was nicknamed *'The Leader of the Believers in Ḥadīth.'* He died in the year 256H.

Al-ḌAḤḤĀK: bin Muzāhim al-Hilālī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Khurasānī, the Imām of *tafsīr.* He was trustworthy and precise and a student of Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr. He died in the year 105H.

AL-DĀRUQUṬNĪ: ʿAlī Ibn ʿUmar Ibn Ahmad, the Imām of his era in hadīth, knowledge of the defects of aḥādīth and author of the famous Sunan. He was well versed in the various recitations of the Qur'ān, *fiqh*, language and poetry. He died in the year 385H.

DĀWŪD AL-ẒĀHIRĪ: Ibn 'Alī Ibn Khalaf al-Aṣbahānī, Abū Sulaymān, the Imām of the *ẓāhirī* School of Thought and one of the Mujtahids. He died in the year 270H.

DIḤYA AL-KALBĪ: Ibn Khalīfah Ibn Farwa Ibn Faḍālah al-Kalbī, the messenger that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent to Qaisar. He witnessed the battle of *al-Khandaq* and lived to see the reign of Mu'āwiyah.

AL-DURR AL-QUNAWĪ: Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq Ibn Muḥammad al-Qunawī al-Rumī, the *Sūfis* and one of the greatest students of ibn Arabī. He was the teacher of at-Talmasānī and authored a number of works such as a commentary to *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.* He died in the year 673H.

FUḌAYL IBN 'AYĀḌ: Ibn Mas'ūd al-Tamīmī, Abū 'Alī, the shaykh of Mecca and one of the righteous worshippers. He was trustworthy and precise, noble, having *wara'* and narrated many aḥād"th. He died in the year 187H.

AL-ḤAJJĀJ BIN YUSŪF: Ibn Abū 'Aqīl bin Mas'ūd al-Thaqafī, Abū Muḥammad, known for his spilling of innocent blood. He died in the year 95H.

Al-ḤALLĀJ: Al-Husayn Ibn Manṣūr, initially he was a devout worshipper but then he took to the extreme *Sufis* ways and left the religion, studying magic and showing people various miraculous feats. The scholars passed the verdict that his blood was lawful and so he was killed in the year 309H.

AL-ḤASAN AL-BAṢRĪ: Al-Ḥasan Ibn Abū al-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī. He was trustworthy and precise, noble and famous. He was a great scholar and narrated many aḥādīth. He died in the year 110H close to the age of ninety.

AL-ḤĀRITH AL-DIMASHQĪ: Ibn Sa'īd. He was a worshipper who would articulate eloquent statements when praising Allāh, so *Shayṭān* came and misguided him into thinking that he was a Prophet. He used to go to the Mosque and show the people amazing things. His affair was conveyed to 'Abdul-Malik who sought him out and finally killed him and crucified him in the year 69H.

ḤASSAN IBN THĀBIT: Ḥassan Ibn Thābit Ibn al-Mundhir, the poet of the Prophet (ﷺ) from the Khazraj tribe of the Anṣār, defended Islām through his poetry. His *Diwān* (collection of poems) has been published.

IBN ABĪ MULAYKAH: bin 'Abdullāh bin Jud'ān al-Madanī. He met thirty Companions and was trustworthy and precise, a Legal Jurist.

IBN AL-'ARABĪ: Muḥiy al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī, Abū Bakr, the heretical *Ṣūfīs*. He authored a number of works containing explicit disbelief and many scholars actually called him a disbeliever. He died in the year 638H.

IBRĀHĪM IBN ADHAM: Ibn Manṣūr al-Tamīmī, the famous ascetic who was known for his precision in ḥadīth. He died in the year 161H.

IBRĀHĪM AL-TAIMĪ: Ibn Yazīd Ibn Sharīk, Abū al-A'mash. He was known for his worship and asceticism. Aḥmad said that he was truthful (*ṣadūq*). He died in the year 92H.

IBLĪS: see *Shayṭān*.

IBN HIBBĀN: Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Tamīmī al-Bustī, the Ḥāfiẓ, Mujtahid and author of the famous *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Ḥibbān*. He died in the year 354H.

IBN AL-JAWZĪ: 'Abdul-Raḥmān Ibn 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad, Abū al-Faraj al-Qurashī al-Tamīmī, the Ḥāfiẓ and Imām. He was a prolific writer and authored around three hundred works. He died in the year 587H.

IBN SAB'ĪN: 'Abdul-Ḥaqq Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Muḥammad al-Raqwaṭī, the philosopher. He believed that Prophethood could be attained by anyone and would hence withdraw to cave Hirā' hoping to receive revelation just as it had come to the Prophet (ﷺ) before him. He died in the year 669H.

IBN SĪNĀ: Abū 'Alī al-Husayn Ibn Sīnā, philosopher and a remarkable physician. He was severely criticised for a great deal of his beliefs due to his delving into philosophy. He died in the year 428H.

'IMRĀN IBN ḤUSAYN: al-Khuzā'ī al-Ka'bī Abū Nujaid. He accepted Islām during the year of *Khaybar* and reported some *aḥādīth* from the Prophet (ﷺ). He died in the year 52H.

ISḤĀQ IBN RĀHAWAYAH: al-Ḥanẓalī al-Tamīmī al-Marwazī, Abū Ya'qūb, the scholar of Khurasān of his time and one of the Mujtahid Imāms. He taught Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Muslim, at-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and others. He died in the year 238H.

JĀBIR IBN 'ABDULLĀH: Ibn 'Amr Ibn Ḥarrām al-Anṣārī al-Sulamī, he witnessed the second pledge at *'Uqbah* while he was still a child. It is said that he witnessed *Badr* and *Uḥud* and he reported many *aḥādīth* from the Messenger (ﷺ). He died in the year 74H.

AL-JUNAYD: Ibn Muḥammad al-Zujjāj, Abū al-Qāsim. He was a

Legal Jurist who followed the school of Abū Thawr and was known for asceticism. He died in the year 297H.

KHĀLID IBN AL-WALĪD: Ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī al-Qurashī Abū Sulaymān. He was a great warrior and military leader and was given the nickname, *'Sword of Allāh.'* He died in the year 21H.

KHIḌR: He is the companion of Mūsā, it is said that he was a Prophet or a righteous servant - however the majority are of the opinion that he was a Prophet. This is because the realities behind his actions can only be known through revelation and because a person does not learn or follow except one who is above him and it is not possible that a non-prophet be above a Prophet. His name and life are greatly differed over and this difference is detailed by ibn Kathīr. Refer to: *'Tafsīr al-Qurtubī'* [11/16] and *'al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah'* [1/355].

KHUBAIB IBN 'ADĪ: Ibn Mālik Ibn 'Āmir al-Awsī al-Anṣārī. He witnessed *Badr* and was martyred during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he was captured by the polytheists in Makkah.

AL-LAYTH IBN SA'D: Ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān al-Fahmī, Abū al-Ḥārith, the Imām of Egypt in ḥadīth, fiqh and language. He was trustworthy and precise and narrated many aḥād"th. Al-Shāfi'ī regarded him to be a better jurist than Mālik. He died in the year 175H.

MĀLIK IBN ANAS: Ibn Mālik Ibn Abū 'Amr al-Asbāhī. The Imām of Madīnah in his time, one of the great Imāms of Islām and author of the famous Muwaṭṭa. His virtues are many and the scholar's praise of him is abundant. He died in the year 179H.

MA'RŪF AL-KARKHĪ: Ibn Fairoz, Abū Ma'fūẓ, one of the shaykhs famous for asceticism and one whose supplication would be answered. He died in the year 200H.

MUʿĀDH IBN JABAL: Ibn ʿAmr Ibn Aws al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī, Abū ʿAbdul-Raḥmān, one of the foremost Companions known for his knowledge of legal rulings and the Qur'ān. He was present at the pledge of *ʿUqbah* and witnessed *Badr* and the following battles and was martyred due to a plague in the year 17H or 18H.

MUʿĀWIYAH: Ibn Abū Sufyān Ibn Ṣakhr Ibn Ḥarb Ibn Umayyah Ibn ʿAbd Shams al-Qurashī al-Amawī. He accepted Islām in the year of the Conquest and witnessed *Ḥunain* and *al-Yamāmah.* He was one of the scribes who would write the revelation and died in the year 60H.

MUSLIM: Ibn al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Muslim al-Qushayrī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Naysābūrī, the Ḥāfiẓ and one of the great Imāms of this nation. He is the author of the Ṣaḥīḥ which is the most authentic book of ḥadīth after Bukhārī. He died in the year 261H.

QATĀDAH: Ibn al-Nuʿmān Ibn Zayd al-Anṣārī al-Awsī, Abū ʿAmr, he witnessed the pledge of *ʿUqbah*, *Badr* and every other battle that the Prophet (ﷺ) fought. He died in the year 23H.

SAʿĪD IBN AL-MUSAYYAB: Ibn Ḥazn, Abū Muḥammad. He excelled in ḥadīth and *fiqh*, and was known for his worship and asceticism. He was one of the *'Seven Legal Jurists'* of Madīnah and Imām Aḥmad regarded him to be the most virtuous of the Successors. He was trustworthy and precise and narrated many aḥādīth. He died in the year 94H.

SAʿD IBN ABĪ WAQQĀS: Saʿd Ibn Mālik Ibn Ahīb Ibn ʿAbd Munāf al-Qurashī al-Zuhrī Abū Isḥāq Ibn Abī Waqqās. One of the ten who were promised Paradise and one whose supplications were answered. He was the last of the ten to pass away in the year 55H.

SA'ĪD IBN ZAYD: Ibn 'Amr al-Adawī al-Qurashī. He witnessed all the battles except for *Badr* and was one of the ten promised Paradise. He died in the year 51H.

SALMĀN: al-Fārisī Abū 'Abdullāh, the servant of the Messenger (ﷺ). The first battle he witnessed was *al-Khandaq* and he was present at all following battles. He died in the year 36H.

AL-SHĀFI'Ī: Muḥammad Ibn Idrees Ibn al-'Abbās Ibn Shāfi'ī al-Hāshimī al-Qurashī, Abū 'Abdullāh, the Mujaddid of his era and one of the great Imāms of this nation. He died in the year 204H.

SHAYṬĀN: Also called Iblīs. He is a Jinn and the enemy of mankind, devoted to leading them astray in any way that he can. The word Shayṭān is derived from the verb *shaṭana* which means to be distant, and indeed Shayṭān is distant from all good.

SUFYĀN AL-THAWRĪ: bin Sa'īd Ibn Masrūq, Abū 'Abdullāh al-Thawrī, one of the great Imāms and worshippers of this nation. He was titled *'The Leader of Believers in Ḥadīth'* and was well versed in *tafsīr*. He was the teacher of Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik amongst others and died in the year 161H.

ṬALḤAH: Ibn 'Ubaydullāh Ibn 'Uthmān Ibn 'Amr al-Qurashī, Abū Muḥammad, one of the ten promised Paradise. He witnessed *Uḥud* and the following battles. He died in the year 36H.

AL-TIRMIDHĪ: Muḥammad Ibn 'Īsā Ibn Sawrah Ibn Mūsā Ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Sulamī al-Tirmidhī, the Imām, Ḥāfiẓ and the author of the famous Sunan. He was trustworthy and precise and one of the students of Bukhārī. He died in the year 279H.

'UMAR IBN AL-KHAṬṬĀB: Abū Ḥafs 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb Ibn Nufayl al-Qurashī al-'Adawī, the second Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of the ten promised Paradise. He accepted Islām five years before the *Hijrah* and his acceptance was a great victory for the Muslims. He witnessed every battle that the Prophet (ﷺ) witnessed. He was martyred in the year 23H.

URWAH: Ibn al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awām al-Asadī, Abū 'Abdullāh. He was trustworthy and precise, a Legal Jurist, a scholar, and he narrated many aḥādīth. He died in the year 94H.

'UTHMĀN IBN 'AFFĀN: *Dhu'l-Nurayn* 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān Ibn Abū'l-'Ās Ibn Umayyah al-Qurashī al-Amawī, the third Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of the ten promised Paradise. He was known for his generosity and freely giving in the Way of Allāh. He was married to two daughters of the Prophet (ﷺ), Ruqayyah and after her death, Umm Kulthūm. He was martyred in the year 35H.

AL-ZUBAYR: Ibn al-Awām Ibn Khuwaylid Ibn Asad al-Qurashī al-Asadī, Abū 'Abdullāh. He migrated to Abysinnia on both the migrations there and accompanied the Messenger on all his military expeditions. He was one of the ten promised Paradise and died in the year 36H.

AL-ZUHRĪ: Muḥammad Ibn Muslim Ibn 'Ubaydullāh al-Qurasahī, Abū Bakr, one of the Imāms of this nation. He was one of the most knowledgeable people of his time of ḥadīth and the Qur'ān. He was trustworthy and precise and narrated many aḥādīth. He died in the year 124H.

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'ARAFAH: a plain 12 miles south-west of Makkah, a little beyond Muzdalifa. It is one of the culminating stations of *Ḥajj.*

BADR: Situated 90 miles south of Madīnah.

BAGHDĀD: Capital of Iraq, situated on the river Tigris.

HIJĀZ: the area from the Red Sea coast of Arabia, from south of Mecca, north beyond Yenbo and inland as far as Madīnah.

HIRĀ': cave at the summit of mount Hirā', a few miles from Makkah.

AL-HURRA: A place just outside Madīnah.

HUDAYBIYYAH: on the road from Jeddah to Makkah, just a few miles outside the *Ḥaram.*

MADINAH: Situated in western Saudi Arabia, 330km north of Makkah.

AL-MARWA: Hill in Makkah, near the Ka'bah and included in one of the rites of *'Umrah* and *Ḥajj*.

MAKKAH: Situated in Saudi Arabia, 80km from the Red Sea coast and founded upon the well of *Zamzam*.

MUZDALIFAH: Situated between Mina and Arafah.

ṢAFĀ: Hill in Makkah, near the Ka'bah and included in one of the rites of *'Umrah* and *Ḥajj*. It is 394 metres from al-Marwā.

ṢUFFAH: An area in the northern part of the Prophet's Mosque, in which the poor or homeless Muslims resided.

ṬĀ'IF: City in eastern Saudi Arabia situated on a plateau and slightly east of Makkah, famous for its grapes.

TIGRIS: River of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. It is 1850 km long and has two principle sources, Lake Hazer and Lake Van, both in Turkey.

UḤUD: a volcanic hill on the western outskirts of Madīnah.

'UKĀẒ: site in Hijāz in the region of Tā'if, south-east of Makkah. Before Islām, once a year, a fair would be held there in the beginning Dhūl Qa'dah where poetry would be read.

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AHLU'L-KALĀM: Adherents to speculative theology, people seeking to explain the articles and premises of belief and to give evidences for them based on philosophy and logic.

ASH‘ARĪ: A sect founded in the third century of *ḥijri*. From their beliefs is that *īmān* is only belief (i.e., actions are not part of *īmān*); that *īmān* does not increase or decrease; that *tawḥīd* is restricted to affirming the perfect nature of Allāh (i.e, *Rubūbiyyah*); and that most of the Attributes of Allāh are metaphorical.

BĀṬINIYYAH: A sect of the Shī‘a, the followers of Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far. They were of the belief that the legal texts were merely superficial expressions carrying inner meanings that oppose what is outwardly understood of them, examples lie with their explanations of Paradise, Hell and the Last Day.

FALĀSIFA: Those philosophers who promoted the *'wisdom'* of the Greeks, the Greek philosophers who did not believe in the Resurrection as it is mentioned in the Book and Sunnah, nor did they affirm the Names and Attributes of Allāh. From amongst their leaders was Aristotle, the student of Plato and from amongst their latter proponents was al-Fārābī and ibn Sīnā.

ḤASHWIYYAH: A term frequently used by the innovators to refer to *Ahlu'l-Sunnah*, the *Ahl'l-Ḥadith*, those who affirmed the Attributes of Allāh. The first to use this term was 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd al-Mu'tazilī who said that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhuma*) was a Ḥashwī.

JABARIYYAH: Followers of the school of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān in his belief that all actions are decreed by Allāh and man has no control over them at all, instead he is forced to do what he does.

JAHMIYYAH: Followers of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān in his denial of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. The student of al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, both of whom were executed for their apostasy in the time of the lesser *tābi'īn*. Among their beliefs is that they deny the Attributes of Allāh and declare that the Qur'ān is created.

KARRĀMIYYAH: Followers of Muḥammad ibn Karrām (d. 255H), they divided into many sub-sects and were famous for their likening of Allāh to His creation (*tashbīh*).

KHAWĀRIJ: Those who rebelled against 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), declaring him to be a disbeliever and those who rebel against and fight the Muslim rulers. They hold that Muslims who have committed major sins are disbelievers and are doomed to Hell-Fire forever.

MU'AṬṬILAH: Those who fall into *ta'ṭīl*; to deny all or some of the Attributes of Allāh.

MUSHABBIHAH: (or *Mujassimah*): Those who declare that Allāh is like His creation and that the Attributes of Allāh are like the attributes of the creation. This was first propagated by Maqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Khurāsānī, during the era of the *tābi'īn*.

MURJI'AH: They uphold the belief of *Irjā'* (to hold that sins, major or minor, do not affect *īmān* (faith) and that *īmān* neither increases nor decreases). The first to call to this belief was Ghīlān ibn Abī Ghīlān, the *qadarī*. He was executed in 105H. They claim that actions are not part of *īmān*, that people do not vary in *īmān*, that *īmān* does not increase and decrease and that one should declare himself a Believer without saying *'If Allāh wills.'* The Murji'ah are divided into three groups, as Shaikh ul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah has mentioned: (i) Those who claim that *īmān* is a condition of the heart only. (ii) Those who claim that *īmān* is merely verbal affirmation (i.e. the *Karrāmiyyah*). (iii) Those who claim that *īmān* is only affirmation with the heart and tongue, but that action is necessary in addition to it.

MUTAKALLIMŪN: Speculative Theologians, adherents to *kalām*.

MU'TAZILAH: Followers of Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' al-Ghazzāl who abandoned the circles of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. They negated the Attributes of Allāh for fear of likening Him to His creation, yet affirmed His Names. From amongst their beliefs was that a person who committed a major sin was neither a believer nor a disbeliever, rather of a station between the two stations, but he would be consigned to Hellfire forever. They were from the rank and file of the *Mutakallimūn* and gave precedence to their intellects over the divine texts.

NĀSIBĪ: One who has hatred towards 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) and the family of the Prophet (ﷺ)

QADARIYYAH: Those who held the belief that man has complete free will in all that he does and that Allāh has no control over him.

QARĀMIṬA: A sect holding the same belief as the Bāṭiniyyah and followers of Maymūn ibn Daysān.

RĀFIḌĪS: Also well-known as the Shī‘ah, who call themselves the *Ithnā Ash'ariyyah* (The Twelvers) of Ja‘farīs. This sect was founded by ‘Abdullāh ibn Saba’, a Jew, who appeared in the time of the *Khilāfah* of ‘Uthmān. He claimed love for ‘Alī and *Ahl ul-Bayt* (the family of the Prophet (ﷺ)). They curse the Companions declare them disbelievers, in particular Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān and the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ). They also believe the Qur’ān to be incomplete.

ṢŪFĪ:An adherent of *Ṣūfism*, a mystical interpretation of Islām that stresses the primary importance of rememberance of Allāh as well as the necessity of submitting one’s will to a spiritual guide in order to progress spiritually. Latter-day *Ṣūfī* doctrines such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being) and *ḥulūl* (incarnation) owe more to Buddhism and Hinduism than they do to Islām.

INDEX OF ARABIC TERMS

Āla: apparatus.

ʿĀrif: The one possessing knowledge. *Ṣūfī*: the one who knows Allāh and the true realities.

ʿAshūrāʾ: 10th Muḥarram, the 1st month of the Islāmic calender.

Āyah: pl. *āyāt*. Sign, miracle, example, lesson, verse.

ʿAbd: pl. *ʿebād*. slave, servant, worshipper.

Al-Abdāl: sing: badal. *Ṣūfī*: the Substitutes.

Abrār: righteous.

Adhān: *fiqh*: the call to prayer.

Aflāq: *phil*: celestial spheres.

Ahl al-Maʿrifah wal-Ithbāt: *Ṣūfī*: The people of knowledge and substantiation. Those endowed with the higher knowledge and verification amongst the *Ṣūfīs*.

Anfāl: spoils of war. The property appropriated from the polytheists while at war with them.

ʿAraḍ: purpose, *phil*: accidental property.

ʿAṭā: bestowal of provision/sustenance.

Awliyāʾ: plural of walī; friend, ally, loyal companion. From the word wilāyah meaning loyalty and closeness, the opposite of enmity.

ʿAwn: assistant, aid.

Al-Awtād: *Ṣūfī*: the Poles, a category of the *Awliyā'*.

Barzakh: barrier, obstruction, an isthmus. *fiqh*: a barrier placed between a person who has deceased and this worldly life.

Bayān: Speech, clarification, discourse. It is of two types: the first whereby the intended meaning is expressed clearly, whatever language it may be in, this category is not regarded as magic; the second whereby the intended meaning is expressed in eloquent, cleverly doctored phrases based upon specific rules such that one listening takes pleasure in hearing the words and they affect his very heart. This category is what has been likened to magic as it captivates and beguiles the heart and overcomes the soul to the point that the face of reality could be transformed to illusion and the one captivated perceive only that which the speaker wants him to perceive. This category can be used in a commendable fashion and in a blameworthy fashion. As for the commendable form, it is to direct the person towards the truth and use these methods to aid the truth. As for the blameworthy form, it is to direct the person towards falsehood or envelop him in confusion such that the truth is seen as falsehood and falsehood as truth. This is completely blameworthy and has been likened to that which is completely blameworthy - magic

Bay'atul Riḍwān: The Pledge of Allegiance with which Allāh was well Pleased. A reference to the pledge given under the tree after *Ḥudaybiyyah*.

Bid'ah: innovation, *fiqh*: that which is newly introduced into the religion of Allāh.

Ḍa'īf: weak. A ḥadīth that has failed to meet the criteria of authenticity.

Dīn: religion, way of life.

Adh-Dharā'i: *fiqh*: means.

Dhawq: taste, *Ṣūfīs*: direct experience of the truth.

Dhikr: remembrance, *fiqh*: making mention of Allāh.

Dhimmī: protected person, *fiqh*: a non-Muslim living under the protection of the Islāmic state. He must pay *jizya*.

Du'ā: supplication, invocation, it is an action of worship that may only be directed to Allāh. It is of two types, supplication through worship (*du'ā 'ibādah*) and supplication of request (*du'ā mas'alah*). The first type of *du'ā* can be understood when one understands that every act of worship is done with the unstated plea that Allāh accept that action of worship and the desire to draw closer to him; and hence attain His pleasure. Hence every action of worship is a type of request to Allāh. The second type of *du'ā* is whereby one explicitly asks his Lord of something such as 'O Allāh! Grant me good in this world and the Hereafter.' The second type includes the first type and the first type necessitates the second type.

Fai': Property legally appropriated by the Muslims by way of land tax and *jizya*.

Fatḥ adh-Dharā'i: *fiqh*: Facilitating the Means.

Fanā': oblivion, absorption, extinction. *Ṣūfī*: to die before dying, annihilation in Allāh, death of the ego, to die in this world and subsist (*baqā'*) in Allāh.

Faqīh: pl. *fuqahā'*. *fiqh*: an expert in Islāmic law, a Legal Jurist.

Faqīr: poor, needy person. *Ṣūfīs*: initiate in a *Ṣūfī* order, the graduate from such an order is called a *Ṣūfī*.

Faqr: poverty, need.

Farḍ: see *wājib*.

Fasād: corruption, decay, and invalidity.

Fatwā: *fiqh*: legal ruling.

Fiqh: understanding and comprehension. *fiqh*: of the rulings and legislation of Islām.

Fisq: pl. *fusūq*. Immorality, transgression, wickedness.

Fitnah: pl. *fitan*. Trial, tribulation, civil strife.

Fiṭrah: primordial nature, the harmony between man, creation and Creator.

Ghanīmah: pl. *ghanā'im*. See *Anfāl*.

Gharāmah: infatuation.

Ghayb: the Unseen, those matters beyond our senses.

Ghubṭa: envy, referring to the permissible form of envy where the envier wishes to have the same blessings as the envied but without desiring to see them removed from the envied. This is opposed to *ḥasad*, the blameworthy form of envy where the envier wishes to see the blessings removed from the envied.

Ḥāfiẓ: pl. *ḥuffāẓ*. Ḥadīth Master, commonly referred to one who has memorised at least 100 000 *aḥādīth*.

Ḥāl: pl. *aḥwāl*, state or condition. *Ṣūfī*: spiritual state, a spiritual realisation that is fleeting or temporary.

Ḥāll: *phil*: subsistent.

Ḥadīth: pl. *aḥādīth*, a text attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) describing his actions, words, descriptions and tacit approvals. It consists of two portions, the body of the text (*matn*) and the *isnād*. Rarely the term is also used to refer to a text attributed to a Companion or a Tābiʿī.

Ḥajj: *fiqh*: pilgrimage, one of the pillars of Islām.

Ḥalāl: released. *fiqh*: permissible.

Ḥanīf: pl. *Ḥunafā'*. Upright and Devout. One who leaves the false religions and beliefs for the truth and does not swerve from it. His outward rectitude reflects what is inside him.

Ḥaqīqah: truth, reality, state of things as they are. ṣufee: a route to Allāh, for his elite that is beyond the *Sharīʿah*.

Ḥarām: forbidden, sacred, restricted. *fiqh*: unlawful, that which the legally responsible person is rewarded for leaving and sinful for doing.

Ḥasad: see *Ghubṭa*.

Ḥasan: good, fair. A ḥadīth whose *isnād* is continuously linked of just, morally upright narrators but whose precision (*ḍabṭ*) falls short of the requirements of the ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth; containing no irregularity (*shādh*) and no hidden defect (*ʿillah*). A ḥadīth can be ḥasan in and of itself, or contain a defect but still be ruled to be so due to supporting evidences.

Hawā': base desires.

Ḥawḍ: the Fount.

Ḥayā': modesty, derived from the word *ḥayāt*, or life because it is through modesty that the heart is granted life and it is through the absence of modesty that it dies. It is a state that arises through the servant being aware that Allāh is watching him, having love, fear and awe of Him and thinking little of himself. Al-Junayd said, '*al-Ḥayā'* is to recognise the bounties of Allāh and then to recognise ones own shortcomings. Through this a state is engendered which is termed *al-Ḥayā'*, the reality of which is that it is a mannerism that prevents one from committing vile actions and from being lax in fulfilling the rights of Allāh.'

Hayūlā: *phil*: primal matter, *materia prima*.

Hudūd: limits, boundaries. *fiqh*: limits ordained by Allāh, prescribed punishments.

Ḥulūl: settling, descent. *phil*: settling of a superior faculty upon a support, incarnation.

Idtibā': placing the middle of the upper garment under the right arm and the ends of it over the left shoulder during *tawāf*.

Iḥrām: the ceremonial state of making Ḥajj or the Ḥajj garments themselves.

Ijtihād: striving and exerting. *fiqh*: striving to attain the Islāmic ruling on an issue, after certain preconditions have been met by the person.

Ilḥād: deviation, atheism.

Iḥsān: beneficence, excellence. To worship Allāh as if one is seeing Him, and knowing that even though one sees Him not, He sees the servant.

Ikhlāṣ: sincerity, to strip oneself of worshiping any besides Allāh such that everything one does is performed only to draw closer to Him and for His pleasure. It is to purify ones actions from any but the Creator having a share in them, from any defect or self-desire. The one who has true *ikhlāṣ* (*mukhliṣ*) will be free of *riyā'*.

Imām: model, exemplar. *fiqh*: religious leader, one who leads the congregational prayer or leads a community.

Īmān: The firm belief, complete acknowledgement and acceptance of all that Allāh and His Messenger have commanded to have faith in, submitting to it both inwardly and outwardly. It is the acceptance and belief of the heart that includes the actions of the heart and body, therefore it encompasses the establishment of the whole religion. This is why the Imāms and Salaf used to say, 'Faith is the statement of the heart and tongue, action of the heart, tongue and limbs.' Hence it comprises statement, action and belief, it increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience. It includes the beliefs of faith, its morals and manners and the actions demanded by it.

'Irfān: *Ṣūfī*: esoteric knowledge.

'Ishk: passionate love.

Isnād: chain of narration.

Ittiḥād: *phil*: unification.

Iẓār: lower cloth of *Iḥrām*.

Jāhiliyyah: Pre-Islāmic Ignorance. Technically this refers to the condition of a people before the guidance of Allāh reaches them, or the state of a people that prevents them from accepting the guidance of Allāh.

Janābah: *fiqh*: state of major impurity.

Janāẓah: *fiqh*: funeral prayer, funeral procession.

Jawhar: pl. *jawāhir*: material substance, essence.

Jihād: striving in the Way of Allāh to make His Word supreme.

Jinn: another creation besides mankind who are invisible to us. They are also subject to the laws of Islām and will be judged in the Hereafter according to how they lived in this life.

Jism: physical body.

Junub: *fiqh*: one who is in a state of major impurity.

Juẓ'iyyāt: *phil*: details, particulars.

Kāfir: a rejecter of faith, disbeliever.

Kalām: speech, discourse. *phil*: dialectics, scholastic theology.

Karāmah: pl. *karāmāt*. Miracles performed by those not Prophets.

Khāriqul 'Ādah: miraculous feats, supernatural occurrences.

Khalwah: *ṣūfī*: solitary retreat.

Khalīfah: pl. *khulafā'*. Successor, representative. *fiqh*: of the Prophet

(ﷺ), head of the Islāmic state. Also called *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* or Leader of the Believers.

Khawf: fear.

Khuṭbah: sermon, lecture. *fiqh*: Friday sermon.

Kufr: denial, rejection, hiding, technically referring to disbelief. It can be major (removing a person from the fold of Islām) or minor (not removing a person from the fold of Islām).

Kulliyyāt: *phil*: generalities, universals.

Lisān al-Ḥāl: *ṣūfī*: tongue of the spiritual state.

Makrūh: *fiqh*: disliked, reprehensible, that which the legally responsible person is rewarded for leaving but not punished for doing.

Maqāmāt: sing: *maqām*, station. *ṣūfī*: spiritual stations, a permanent spiritual realisation.

Maqdūr: foreordained.

Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah: *fiqh*: Public Interest.

Maʿrifah: gnosis. Knowledge that is acted upon by the one who knows, the Gnostic of Allāh is one who has knowledge of Allāh, the path that leads to Allāh and the pitfalls of that path. He is one who knows Allāh, His Names, Attributes and Actions and then displays *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* towards Allāh in all things. He works towards removing all despicable morals and mannerisms and has *ṣabr* in all of this.

Matrūk: abandoned. This refers to a narrator of a ḥadīth who is abandoned due to being accused of lying.

Mawḍuʿ: fabricated ḥadīth. That ḥadīth which is a lie against the Prophet (ﷺ).

Muʿjiẓah: pl. *muʿjiẓāt*. Miracles performed by Prophets.

Mufassir: pl. *mufassirūn*. Exegete, commentator. *fiqh*: one who explains the Qur'ān.

Muhājir: pl. *Muhājirūn*. One who perform *hijrah*. *fiqh*: the Companions who migrated from Makkah to Madīnah.

Muḥaddith: pl. *muḥaddithūn*. Scholar of Ḥadīth.

Mujtahid: one who performs *ijtihād*. *fiqh*: that level of scholar who can deduce independent verdicts directly from the primary Islāmic sources.

Mukhāṭabah: *ṣūfī*: disclosure of hidden realities - the *ṣūfī* hearing things via extraordinary means.

Mukāshafah: *ṣūfī*: unveiling of hidden realities - the *ṣūfī* attaining knowledge through extraordinary means.

Mushāhadah: *ṣūfī*: vision of hidden realities - the *ṣūfī* seeing things via extraordinary means.

Murāqabah: self-inspection. The servant having the sure knowledge that Allāh sees him in all circumstances and knows all that he is doing, as such the he does his utmost not to fall into the prohibited matters and to correct his own failings.

Mukallaf: morally responsible person.

Mulḥid: heretic.

Munāfiq: hypocrite. *fiqh*: one who outwardly displays Islām but inwardly conceals disbelief. This is the worst type of hypocrisy and its possessor is the worst type of disbeliever, there are other lesser types.

Munqaṭiʿ: a ḥadīth whose *isnād* is not connected, meaning that has a narrator missing. This is a sub-category of the *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth.

Murābaḥah: *fiqh*: resale with specification of gain.

Murīd: one who wants, desires, aims for something. *ṣūfī*: a devotee to a *ṣūfī shaykh.*

Mursal: a ḥadīth whose *isnād* has the name of the Companion missing, i.e. a Successor reports directly from the Prophet (ﷺ). In the eyes of the majority of scholars such a ḥadīth is a sub-category of the *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth.

Mutashābih: unclear and ambiguous. *fiqh*: an *āyah* of the Qur'ān that is not clear and conclusive in meaning from the wording of the text itself.

Naṣīḥah: Sincere/Faithful advice.

Nidd: peer.

An-Nujabā': *ṣūfī*: the Nobles, a category of the *Awliyā'*.

An-Nuqabā': *ṣūfī*: the Leaders, a category of the *Awliyā'*.

Qaḍā: see *qadar*.

Qadar: Allāh's decree of all matters in accordance with His prior knowledge and as dictated by His wisdom.

Qiblah: *fiqh*: direction to which the Muslims pray, towards the *ka'bah*.

Qiyās: *fiqh*: Analogy.

Qur'ān: The actual Word of Allāh revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the Arabic language through the medium of the Angel Gabriel and the greatest miracle bestowed him. It consists of 114 chapters commencing with al-Fātiḥah and ending with an-Nās.

Al-Quṭb: *ṣūfī*: the Axis, the greatest of the *Awliyā'*.

Raghabah: fervent desire.

Rahbah: dread.

Rajā': reverential hope.

Ramaḍān: ninth month of the Islāmic calendar.

Riḍā: contentment and pleasure.

Riyā': showing off, ostentation, an example of which lies in person beautifying actions of worship because he knows people are watching.

Ruqyā: recitation used to cure an illness or disease. It can only be done in the Arabic tongue, in words whose meaning is understood, using verses of the Qur'ān or supplications of the Prophet combined with the belief that it is only Allāh who in reality gives the cure.

Sabābah: fervent longing.

Ṣabr: patience, steadfastness.

Sadd adh-Dharā'i': *fiqh*: Blocking the Means.

Ṣaḥīḥ: healthy, sound, authentic, correct. A ḥadīth that has met the criteria of authenticity and can be used as a legal proof.

Ṣalāh: *fiqh*: the second pillar of Islām, the prayer.

Salaf: predecessors, commonly employed to refer to the first three generations of Muslims.

Ṣawm: *fiqh*: fasting, one of the pillars of Islām.

Ṣidq: truthfulness, the conformity of the inner to the outer such that the deeds and statements of the person do not belie his beliefs and vice-versa. *Ṣidq* is the foundation of faith and results in peace of mind, lying is the foundation of hypocrisy and results in doubt and suspicion, and this is why the two can never co-exist without being at odds with each other. al-Junayd was asked as to whether *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* were the same or different and he replied, 'They are different, *ṣidq* is the root and *ikhlāṣ* is the branch. *Ṣidq* is the foundation of everything and *ikhlāṣ* only comes into play once one commences an action. Actions are only acceptable when they combine both.' The one who has true *ṣidq* will be free of self-conceit.

Shaghafah: crazed passion.

Shahādah: testification, witness. The declaration that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger of Allāh.

Shahwā: carnal lusts.

Sharīʿah: divine Islāmic law as ordained by Allāh.

Sharīk: partner, associate.

Shaykh: old man. *fiqh*: learned person, scholar. *ṣūfī*: a guide along the spiritual path.

Shayṭān: Satan, Iblīs, a devil.

Shirk: association, technically referring to directing a right that is due to Allāh Alone to another object of creation, either completely or partially. It can be major (removing a person from the fold of Islām) or minor (not removing a person from the fold of Islām).

Sunan: a compilation of *aḥādīth*.

Sunnah: way, path. The actions, words, descriptions, commands, prohibitions and tacit approvals of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Sūrah: chapter of the Qur'ān.

Ṣūrah: image, form, face.

Tābiʿūn: The generation following that of the Companions.

Tabʿ Tābiʿūn: The generation following that of the *Tābiʿūn*.

Ṭāghūt: all that is falsely worshipped besides Allāh.

Tafsīr: elucidation, clarification, explanation. *fiqh*: of the Qur'ān.

Takalluf: affectation, going beyond bounds.

Taklīf: liability, obligation.

Taqdīr: fore-ordainment.

Taqwā: the basic meaning of which is setting a barrier between two things. This is why it is said that one *ittaqā* with his shield, i.e. he set it as a barrier between him and the one who wished him evil. Therefore it is as if the one who has *taqwa* (*muttaqī*) has used his following the commands of Allāh and avoiding His prohibitions as a barrier between himself and the Punishment. Hence he has preserved and fortified himself against the punishment of Allāh through his obeying Him.

Ṭarīqah: path, *ṣūfī*: spiritual path.

Tatayyuma: worshipful love.

Ṭawāf: circumambulation of the Kaʿbah

Ṭawāf Al-Ifāda: *ṭawāf* for Ḥajj.

Ṭawāf Al-Widā: farewell *ṭawāf*.

Tawakkul: trust and absolute reliance.

Tawḥīd: unification, monotheism, the belief in the absolute Oneness of Allāh. It is to believe that Allāh Alone is the creator, nourisher, and sustainer of the worlds; it is to believe that Allāh Alone deserves to be worshipped; and it is to believe that He has unique and perfect Names and Attributes that far transcend anything that one can imagine.

Ummah: nation, the Muslim nation.

ʿUrf: *fiqh*: Customary Usage.

Wājib: *fiqh*: obligatory, that which a legally responsible person is rewarded for doing and sinful for leaving. In the eyes of the majority *wājib* has the same meaning as *farḍ*.

Waḥdatu-l-Wujūd: The unity of existence, the heretical belief that Allāh is everywhere and everything.

Wajd: strong emotion, technically referring to spiritual ecstasy. The heart experiencing sudden surges of intense love, desire, awe and glorification of Allāh.

Waraʿ: pious caution, scrupulousness. A mannerism through which the heart is purified of all that would sully it and has been excellently summarised in the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ), "From the excellence of ones Islām is his leaving that which does not concern him." It is to leave all that causes one doubt, all that does not concern him, to continuously bring oneself to account and to devote oneself to Allāh. Some of the Salaf said, 'None attains the reality of *taqwā* until he leaves that which is harmless for fear of falling into that which is harmful.'

Waliy: pl. *Awliyā'*. Friends, Allies, Saints - those who have faith and *taqwā*.

Wuḍu': *fiqh*: ritual ablution.

Yaqīn: certainty. It is to faith (*Īmān*) what the soul is to the body, it is the soul to the actions of the heart which in turn formulate the souls to the actions of the limbs and through it one attains the rank of Ṣiddīq. From *yaqīn* does *tawakkul* (absolute reliance in Allāh) sprout and through *yaqīn* is all doubt, suspicion and worry dispelled and the heart filled with love, hope and fear of Allāh. *Yaqīn* is of three levels, that which arises from knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqīn*), seeing (*'ain al-yaqīn*) and actual experience (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).

Zakāh: *fiqh*: one of the pillars of Islām, an obligatory tax levied on a Muslim wealth subject to certain criteria.

Zindīq: heretic, *fiqh*: Ḥanafī - one who does not adhere to a religion; Others - one who is a disbeliever pretending to be a Muslim.

Zuhd: asceticism.